BIRTH OF THE FIRST:
AUTHENTICITY AND THE COLLECTING OF MODERN FIRST EDITIONS, 1890-1930

Madeleine Myfanwy Thompson

Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of English,
Indiana University
July 2013

Accepted by the Graduate Faculty, Indiana University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Doctoral Committee

_____

Christoph Irmscher, PhD

_____

Joel Silver, JD, MLS

_____

Paul Gutjahr, PhD

_____

Joss Marsh, PhD

24 May 2013

Acknowledgements

One of the best things about finishing my dissertation is the opportunity to record my gratitude to those who have supported me over its course.

Many librarians have provided me valuable assistance with reference requests during the past few years; among them include staff at New York Public Library's Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, NYPL's Rare Book Division, the Grolier Club Library, and The Lilly Library at Indiana University. I am especially indebted to The Lilly's Public Services staff, who not only helped me to track down materials I needed but also provided me constant models of good librarianship. Additionally, I am grateful to the Bibliographical Society of America for a 2011 Katharine Pantzer Fellowship in the British Book Trades, which allowed me the opportunity to return to The Lilly Library to research the history of Elkin Mathews, Ltd. for my fourth chapter.

I feel fortunate to be part of a family of writers and readers, and for their support, advice, and commiseration during the hardest parts of this project I am grateful to Anne Edwards Thompson, Gene Cohen, Clay Thompson, and especially to my sister, Elizabeth Thompson. I was also fortunate to be surrounded at Indiana University by smart, funny colleagues and friends, among them Melanie Brezniak, Ashley Miller, and Deborah Strickland. And with me all along the way were Adam Pence and our Louise and Melville, with whom I feel lucky to be part of a little team.

Lastly, this project owes much to my dissertation committee: to Paul Gutjahr and Joss Marsh, whose comments and questions helped to shape my

work; to Joel Silver, whose guidance and mentoring started me on this project; and finally, to Christoph Irmscher, without whom I never would have finished it. The frequency with which I found myself expressing my gratitude to Christoph over the past few years has been so great that when I type the words “thank you” into my email now, the auto-text feature I have set up there presumes that the next word will be his name. His thoughtful and prompt feedback, his own inspiring productivity, and his unstinting encouragement have helped to see me through to the end.

Madeleine Myfanwy Thompson

BIRTH OF THE FIRST:
AUTHENTICITY AND THE COLLECTING OF MODERN FIRST EDITIONS, 1890-1930

The last two decades of the nineteenth century saw the rise in Britain and America of what several contemporary critics dubbed a "mania" for modern first editions as book collectors trained their sights on authors who were contemporaries and, in some cases, still living. Prices for modern authors reached unmatched heights in the collectors' market, and both bibliophilic publications and general interest newspapers and magazines closely covered the trend. Rapidly developing throughout the 1890s and booming during the 1920s, the so-called mania for modern firsts eventually peaked during the early 1930s.

Drawing heavily on original research, my dissertation explores the collectors, booksellers, authors, publishers, and books central to this collecting trend. To some extent, I offer a history of the early practice of collecting modern first editions. At the same time, I propose that this form of book collecting signaled imperatives and desires central to the times and places in which it flourished. I thus consider how the modern firsts trend intersected with the development of modern literary scholarship, the cult of authorial celebrity, changing attitudes toward books, the history of the genteel tradition, and economic motivations of the book trade. Yet even as this constellation of factors points to the complex reasons for the trend's development, a common

preoccupation with authenticity runs throughout period's literature on modern firsts collecting. Those writing about modern firsts dwelled not only on what marked a "true" first but also on what validated the collecting of one author over another; furthermore, they obsessed over the authenticity of collectors and what it meant to be a legitimately cultured person. The field of modern firsts and its inherently speculative nature raised questions about what books should be collected, who should be collecting them, and who had the authority to make these decisions.

_____

Christoph Irmscher, PhD

_____

Joel Silver, JD, MLS

_____

Paul Gutjahr, PhD

_____

Joss Marsh, PhD

Table of Contents

Introduction

Birth of the First: The Emergence of Modern First Editions, 1890-1930

In March 1894, *The Times* reviewed a new manual for book collectors. Written by J. H. Slater, a prolific author on book collecting, *Early Editions: A Bibliographical Survey of the Works of Some Popular Modern Authors* provided basic bibliographic descriptions and typical auction prices for first editions by more than thirty authors, from Ainsworth and Arnold to Tennyson and Thackeray. Apart from observing that Slater's work was "apparently a very painstaking compilation," the review is generally unconcerned with evaluating the book itself. Rather, what preoccupies *The Times* reviewer is the book's *raison d'être*: the collecting of modern authors in first editions. "It is not very easy to understand the mania which has taken hold of some people, otherwise sane, for collecting early editions of modern and contemporary authors," the reviewer sniffed. "We neither share the mania nor understand it."[1]

Indeed, beginning in the late 1880s and booming during the 1890s, the trend for collecting first editions of modern authors took hold in Britain and the United States, as the numbers of collectors seeking out modern authors, and the prices they were willing to pay, soared—so much so that publications from the *Illustrated London News* and the *Cornhill* to the *New York Times* and Chicago's *Daily Inter Ocean* echoed the *Times* reviewer in diagnosing the "mania" for modern first editions.[2] Although the frenzy for these books abated in the years

[1] "Books of the Week."
[2] See Lang, "First Edition Mania"; Ellington, "Famous First Editions"; "The Sale in Boston"; "Mr. P. D. Armour's Valuable Book." Beside these, other publications to report on the "mania" during

before World War I, it would return even stronger during the 1920s, with expanded ranks of modern firsts collectors and record-setting values for works by modern authors, some of which, when inflation is taken into account, still have not been surpassed in 2013. This dissertation explores this history as it seeks to understand the origins and consequences, between 1890 and 1930, of the development of the modern firsts field in Britain and the US.

To some extent, the initial tidal wave of interest in collecting modern first editions arose within a wider sea of enthusiasm for book collecting churning in the final decades of the nineteenth century. This period saw the founding of significant bibliophilic institutions, including the Grolier Club in New York (1884), the Bibliographical Society (1892), and the Bibliographical Society of America (1904). Several book collecting memoirs and handbooks appeared during this period, and a spate of book collecting periodicals sprang up to cater to the popular interest, such as *Book-Lore* (1884), *Bibliographica* (1895), *American Book-Lore* (1898), *The Book Lover* (1899), and *The Literary Collector* (1900). Mainstream newspapers in Britain and the US regularly reported on book sales and speculated on the trends they revealed. Those seeking further information on auction values could consult the newly begun *Book Prices Current* and *American Book Prices Current*, whose annual volumes swelled across the 1890s as the number of auction sales increased.[3]

---

the 1890s include the *Fortnightly Review* and the *Bookman*, where William Robertson and Thomas J. Wise debated "The First Edition Mania." See chapters 1 and 2 for more on this.

[3] When it began in 1895, *American Book Prices Current* recorded 6,025 book and manuscript sales for the year; by the time the 1900 volume appeared, that figure had increased to 9,662. See *ABPC* 6:v.

Yet, quite apart from this general interest in book collecting, what was so difficult for the disgruntled *Times* reviewer in 1894 to understand was the particular trend toward valuing first editions by authors who were contemporaries and, in some cases, still living—for what made this type of book collecting so striking was both its unprecedented nature and the swift popularity it gained. Prior to the 1880s, collectors typically focused on "old books": incunabula, classical works, and early English literature. Some exceptions exist—Frederick Locker-Lampson and the American collector Charles Frederickson each collected nineteenth-century authors before 1880—but their peers largely regarded these collectors' habits as novel and even eccentric.[4] Additionally, while books by Charles Dickens and W. M. Thackeray were popularly collected by the 1870s, collectors tended to be attracted to these books for the illustrations they contained. Over the following two decades, however, a new school of collectors emerged whose interests lay distinctly with modern authors. Along with Dickens and Thackeray, the most popularly collected were the Brownings, D. G. Rossetti, John Ruskin, A. C. Swinburne, and Alfred Tennyson; by the century's close, Robert Bridges, the Brontës, George Eliot, Rudyard Kipling, George Meredith, and Robert Louis Stevenson would join the list.

The end of the nineteenth century was thus the first period in which collectors heeded the literature of their contemporaries, and these newly valued books were thus remarkable for their age—or rather lack of age—and contents, as unillustrated literary works. Yet in privileging first editions of modern authors,

[4] See Carter, *Taste and Technique*, 19; Cannon, *American Book Collectors*, 154-55. Frederickson began assembling his large collection of Shelley, Byron, and other early-nineteenth-century authors before 1870; by the time Locker-Lampson published his 1886 catalogue, his renowned cabinet library included many living authors.

collectors also displayed a relatively new attention to the bibliographic form of these books. Although first editions are widely known today, even by non-collectors, as desirable collectors' items, the preference for first editions is a relatively modern phenomenon, customary only by the late nineteenth century. To be sure, an interest in first editions predates the collecting of modern authors. The Reverend Thomas Frognall Dibdin—who popularized the term "bibliomania" in his 1809 mock pathological treatise by that title—cited the seventeenth-century French Protestant divine David Ancillon as a rare early first edition enthusiast. By Dibdin's time, collecting first editions had cohered into a recognized taste among collectors, and in *Bibliomania* he identified the passion for first editions as one sign of that malady (along with an obsession with large paper copies, uncut copies, illustrated copies, unique copies, copies printed upon vellum, "true" editions, and black letter editions). James Beresford's 1810 *Bibliosophia*—the title was offered as a corrective to Dibdin's—elaborated on these symptoms in a 96-line poem spoken by an obsessed book collector. While first editions may not be significant to readers, he claimed, they are of the utmost consequence to the zealous collector:

> Who of *Editions* recks the least,
> But, when that Hog, his Mind, would feast,
> Fattens the intellectual Beast
> With old, or new, without ambition,—.
> I'll teach the pig to soar on high,
> (If pigs had pinions, by the bye);—
> Howe'er the *last* may *satisfy,*

The *bonne bouche* is the 'FIRST *Edition*.'

Still, Dibdin and Beresford acknowledged that only the most gourmandizing collector tended to seek out these *bonnes bouches*. In fact, Dibdin advised readers that "if first editions are, in some instances, of great importance, they are in many respects superfluous, and an incumbrance to the shelves of a collector."[5] Dibdin's view, typical of early-nineteenth-century bibliophiles, was that the most desirable edition was not necessarily the first but, more likely, the best edited or the most attractive. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, a preference for first editions prevailed. This trend arose independently of the growing popularity for modern authors, yet the two became so strongly associated in the late nineteenth century that references to first editions often implied first editions specifically by modern authors.[6]

Before continuing with a brief historical overview of the period under consideration in this study, it is useful to provide some definition of its central subject: modern first editions. This is not an easy task. The terms *modern first editions* and *modern firsts* begin to appear around the 1920s, preceded by bulkier phrases like "works by modern authors in first edition form." These terms all refer to first editions by modern authors, but historically shifting understandings as well as flat-out misunderstandings of its two components—modern authors and first editions—can make defining modern first editions difficult. J. H. Slater's 1894 *Early Editions … Of Some Popular Modern Authors* included

[5] Beresford, *Bibliosophia*, vi; Dibdin, *Bibliomania*, 70.
[6] The most notable example of this is William Roberts's screed against "The First Edition Mania," which primarily concerns the collecting of modern authors in first edition.

among its "modern" subjects still-living writers such as Robert Bridges and Andrew Lang, but it also included William Combe, who had been dead for more than seventy years, and Robert Burns, who had been dead for nearly one hundred. The inclusion in the modern firsts category of works by authors who flourished during the early and mid-nineteenth century would continue through the 1890s, with Lord Byron, John Keats, P. B. Shelley, and Charles Lamb all still considered moderns. During the late 1920s, however, a definition of "modern" began to consolidate around works published within the previous thirty to forty years.[7] In fact, this definition of modern firsts, set during the 1920s, has remained static as modern firsts are still today typically considered to be books published from the 1890s onward.

Defining the term's other component, *first edition*, presents its own challenges, which are best summed up (as are most bookish definitions) by the authoritative *ABC for Book Collectors*:

> Very, *very* roughly speaking, [the first edition is] the first appearance of the work in question, independently, between its own covers. But, like many other household words, this apparently simple term is not always as simple as it appears. The question

[7] See, for instance, Frederick Hopkins's "Field of Old and Rare Books" *Publishers' Weekly* column for 31 Dec. 1927. Hopkins refers to J. C. Eckel's definition, given in the Dec. 1927 issue of the *American Collector*, of modern firsts as "books printed within thirty-five or forty years" (2315). See also Sawyer and Darton's 1927 *English Books, 1475-1900*, which defines modern firsts as books published from "about the close of the reign of Queen Victoria" forward (331) and Elkin Mathews's Apr. 1930 catalogue, *Catalogue of Modern First Editions, That Is, Of Books Published Between the Years 1890-1930*.

> *When is a first edition not a first edition?* is a favourite debating exercise among bibliographers and advanced collectors.[8]

Adding to the confusion, the entry continues, is a common misunderstanding about the difference between an *edition* and an *impression* (and a misuse of these terms indeed appears throughout the literature on collecting first editions). An edition "comprises all copies of a book printed at *any* time or times from one setting-up of type without substantial change," while an impression "comprises the whole number of copies of that edition printed at *one* time, i.e. without the type or plates being removed from the press."[9] Thus, while additional copies of a book may be printed after its initial print run, unless the type has been substantially changed, these additional copies constitute a new impression, not a new edition. And books labeled as first editions are understood, within the world of book collectors, to be first impressions of first editions unless they have been otherwise noted. Beyond this lack of understanding about editions and impressions, however, more philosophical queries can also make the term *first edition* less than straightforward, as *ABC for Book Collectors* points out. My dissertation does not attempt to take up that favorite debating exercise, *When is a first edition not a first edition?* Yet it does explore factors, including the emerging practice of publishing limited editions before trade editions during the 1920s, which began to complicate understandings of the first edition.

Finally, a note on prices is in order. Throughout this study, I refer to contemporary prices of books, including prices upon publication, auction sale

[8] Carter and Barker, eds., *ABC for Book Collectors*, 103.
[9] Ibid., 87.

prices, catalogue prices, and prices estimated by guidebooks. In his 1941 history of American book collectors, Carl Cannon writes, "Prices are notoriously worthless as an indication of anything except the preferences of the moment"—and that is exactly how I use them here, as an indicator of contemporary preferences, especially as I discuss the increases in prices for modern firsts during the 1920s.[10] Because I hope to illustrate the astonishing heights to which some prices rose, I also, from time to time, convert historical prices to their equivalent price in today's dollars. To do this, I have used calculating tools based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), an inflationary index that measures changes in the costs of representative goods and services to a typical consumer.[11] Angus O'Neill, who has written on historical prices for rare books, however, points out that rare books are not actually "representative" goods, and, as such, he recommends basing conversions on per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP).[12] And yet because the CPI provides a more conservative estimate for price conversions—and because, as I suggest throughout this study, modern firsts were not sought by the richest collectors only—I have chosen to cite the CPI-based figures within the text.

J. H. Slater's 1894 *Early Editions … Of Some Popular Modern Authors*, so roundly criticized by *The Times*, was the first guidebook devoted to assisting the new collectors of modern first editions. As early as 1891, however, Slater had

[10] Cannon, *American Book Collectors*, 229.
[11] I have relied on the calculators and tables found on the Measuring Worth website, founded by faculty from the University of Illinois at Chicago's Economics Department, and on Alan Eliasen's Historical Currency Conversions website.
[12] O'Neill, "Prices and Exchange Rates," 333-34.

already begun commenting on what he too identified as a "mania" for collecting first editions of modern authors, and he noted in an 1893 *Athenaeum* article on the previous year's book sales that modern poets—including Tennyson, the Brownings, Bridges, Meredith, Swinburne, Matthew Arnold, and Austin Dobson—had "fared very well at the auctioneer's hand."[13] Slater was well suited to report this: he was the first editor of *Book Prices Current*, the British annual index of books sold at auction and their prices. And surveying this series, as well as its transatlantic cousin, *American Book Prices Current*, indeed reveals not only high prices for modern authors across the 1890s but also the growing ranks of modern authors being collected. Identifying patterns in auction records is notoriously difficult, with condition, binding, provenance, and availability among the many factors creating a unique situation for each item sold at auction. Yet, if we use caution, some indication of the popularity of modern first editions can be derived from these auction indices. Among the high prices paid for titles by these authors were £46 in 1899 (over $5,000 in today's dollars) for a bound copy of Kipling's *Schoolboy Lyrics* (Privately printed, 1881), £52 in the same year (over $5,700 in today's dollars) for Tennyson's *The Falcon* (Privately printed, 1879), and $425 in 1901 (almost $12,500 in today's dollars) for a presentation copy of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Battle of Marathon* (Privately printed, 1820).[14] For the most part, the numbers of titles by Arnold, Dobson, Stevenson, Swinburne, Tennyson, the Brontës, the Brownings, the Rossettis, Lewis Carroll, Andrew

[13] See Slater, *Round and About the Book Stalls*, 116; Slater, "Book Sales of 1892."
[14] *BPC* 14:96 [Sotheby's, 20 Nov. 1899]; *BPC* 14:116 [Sotheby's, 20 Nov. 1899]; *ABPC* 7:63 [Arnold sale, Apr. 1901]. *The Falcon* was actually a Wise forgery, and it sold alongside another Wise forgery, of Tennyson's *The Cup* (Privately printed, 1881).

Lang, William Morris, and Oscar Wilde sold at auction in Britain and the US between 1887 and 1901 saw a steady growth.[15]

As we have seen, not everyone celebrated the advent of this new collecting trend, and, in fact, its critics were relentless. An 1898 *Book Buyer* article aptly remarked that the "first edition has been a favorite theme for the scorn of those who love it not," and similar complaints against modern first editions would resound throughout the early decades of the field's development.[16] Of special concern to those criticizing the collecting of modern firsts was the fact that many of the authors were still living or only recently deceased. Among the thirty-two subjects of Slater's *Early Editions … Of Some Popular Modern Authors*, for instance, ten were still alive and five had died only within the previous ten years. Coupled with arguments that authors were too recent to be considered collectable were concerns that prices for modern firsts had risen too high. Furthermore, critics complained that commercial interests dominated the collecting of modern first editions. Even Slater, within weeks of publishing *Early Editions*, protested against the consequences of the new obsession with first editions, claiming that "these collectors cannot bear to be told what they must in their hearts have begun by this time to suspect, that the prices they pay are generally arbitrary and frequently ruinous, though not, indeed, to the pocket, for these gentlemen have usually plenty of money to part with."[17]

---

[15] To determine this, I tracked the number of times works by these authors appeared at auction over a sampling of years between 1887 and 1901. I referred to *BPC* 1 (Dec. 1886-Nov. 1887), *BPC* 5 (Dec. 1890-Nov. 1891), *BPC* 9 (Dec. 1894-Nov. 1895), *ABPC* 1 (Sept. 1894-Sept. 1895), *BPC* 14 (Nov. 1899-July 1900), and *ABPC* 7 (Sept. 1900-1901).
[16] Hilliard, "Rare Books on the Anglers' Art," 37.
[17] Slater, "Rare Editions," 379. Slater's statements against the collecting of modern firsts, printed in the *Athenaeum*, set off weeks of responses in the magazine, including a denunciation of Slater's

By 1910, the trend died down enough for some to have declared it over. Yet perhaps the best signal that collecting modern firsts was not merely a passing fad was its inclusion in A. W. Pollard's authoritative entry on book collecting in the 1911 *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Although he cautioned against manufactured rarities, Pollard noted that the "collector of quite modern works may render admirable service to posterity."[18] By the early 1920s, publications in the US and England were again beginning to report on the popularity of collecting modern first editions, and by 1926, the bibliophile John Winterich was advising readers of his book collecting guide that "contemporary and near contemporary writers are now in greater collecting demand than at any time in the history of collecting." Through the early 1930s, auction and bookseller catalogues, the "Books Wanted" section of *Publishers' Weekly*, and commentary in trade publications show the demand growing, as the numbers of collectors seeking modern first editions rose alongside the prices they were willing to pay for these books. During the 1920s, collecting modern American authors grew in popularity, and Lafcadio Hearn, James Branch Cabell, Mark Twain, and Joseph Hergesheimer were in high demand. Actually, American authors had been collected since the mid-1880s, with attention focused on Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Greenleaf Whittier, and other New England writers. But throughout the developing trend in collecting modern first editions, British authors remained most sought by collectors. By the 1920s, the most popular authors included Joseph Conrad, Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling, John

---

"lame and impotent conclusion" from the art and book dealer Frank T. Sabin. See Sabin, "Rare Editions."

[18] Pollard, "Book Collecting."

Galsworthy, J. M. Barrie, and John Masefield. Values of works by modern British authors skyrocketed over the decade, reaching the height of $14,000 in 1927 (more than $187,000 in today's dollars) for the sale of Rudyard Kipling's *The Smith Administration* (Wheeler, 1891)—the highest price paid at that time for a work by a living author and a record unsurpassed today.[19]

Around the 1930s, some commentators saw a marked downturn in the collecting of first editions and pointed out plunging prices. The stock market crash seemed to have put an end to a pastime that had its day. But within months after the crash, *Publishers' Weekly* was still reporting on high prices in the collectors' market for modern firsts, and a year after the crash, the journal claimed that the interest in modern first editions "shows no sign of abating."[20] By the first years of the 1930s, however, a so-called "slump" in modern firsts was finally underway—to the point that in 1931 the bookselling firm of Elkin Mathews Ltd., which specialized in the sale of modern firsts, overhauled their stock and reevaluated cost and selling prices according to these new, lesser values. To any collectors who "ruefully" compared the prices they had previously paid with these new values, the firm offered their regret and reminded these collectors that "we have suffered a much greater loss than they."[21] Although a survey of the firm's catalogues 17 and 18 (released in September 1927 and February 1928) compared with catalogue 35 in April 1931 shows that prices for authors including Barrie, Galsworthy, and Siegfried Sassoon were still on the rise, collectors of such authors as Walter de la Mare, Norman Douglas, John Drinkwater, and George

[19] *ABPC* 34:353 [Anderson Galleries, 25 Nov. 1927].
[20] "Serious Problem of Today," 2297.
[21] Elkin Mathews Ltd. Cat. 35 (Apr. 1931): 4.

Gissing indeed may have viewed the later catalogue with regret as they saw values for their books plummet.[22]

Yet in spite of this waxing and waning of interest, the collecting of first editions by contemporary writers was here to stay. The trade flourishes today in venues from exclusive auction houses and bookstores to online marketplaces such as eBay and AbeBooks. Price guides, made fatter every year by the growing entries for modern firsts, continue to advise collectors on values and identifying points for first editions. Once labeled the "strangest" and "maddest" of all book collecting fields, modern firsts today are an establishment among the collecting world.[23]

So, why modern firsts? This is the question I set out to explore at this project's inception, attempting to understand what attracted collectors to modern authors with such fervor during the 1890s and 1920s. As I found, this same question—why modern firsts?—also fascinated both collectors of modern first editions and their detractors. While critics railed against the activity of collecting modern firsts, collectors self-consciously defended their choices. Throughout the following chapters, I trace these responses, which aired in collectors' handbooks, catalogues, and other specialty publications, as well as in mainstream periodicals, and increasingly so as the trend grew. At the same time that I document contemporary reactions to the modern firsts trend, though, I also examine how

[22] For instance, De La Mare's *Come Hither* (Constable, 1923) dropped from £4 4*s* *to* £2 10*s*, Douglas's *D. H. Lawrence and Maurice Magnus* from 21*s* to 15*s*, Drinkwater's *The God of Quiet* (Privately printed, 1924) from 36*s* to 25*s* (the latter copy inscribed), and Gissing's *The Paying Guest* (Cassel, 1895) from 35*s* to 22*s*.
[23] See Roberts, *Rare Books and their Prices*, 963.

this new form of collecting signified cultural desires and imperatives; in doing so, I consider the historical context in which collectors focused on modern firsts as I seek to understand what influenced this development. And just like the trend's supporters and critics who theorized its appeal, I find no simple answer, instead exploring the twisting and sometimes contradictory reasons that brought collectors to modern firsts.

Even as the complexity of these reasons became clear to me, so too did a consistent preoccupation with authenticity running throughout the period's literature on modern firsts collecting. Those writing both in support of and against the collecting of modern firsts dwelled not only on the markers of a "true" first but also on what validated the collecting of one author over another; furthermore, they obsessed over the authenticity of collectors and what it meant to be a legitimately cultured person. The field of modern firsts and its inherently speculative nature raised questions about what books should be collected, who should be collecting them, and who had the authority to make these decisions.

In the first chapter, I examine the trend's origins at the end of the nineteenth century. Here I consider how the modern firsts trend intersected with the development of modern literary scholarship, the cult of authorial celebrity, and concerns about the fleetingness of authenticity in an increasingly reproducible world. Broadening the inquiry into *why* collectors turned to modern firsts, the second and third chapters also examine *who* was collecting modern first editions. Chapter 2 studies two influential early collectors of modern firsts, Thomas James Wise and William Harris Arnold. Wise, when he is known today, is remembered for his clever forgeries of dozens of pamphlets by

mid- and late-nineteenth-century British authors. Yet Wise was a pioneering figure in the field of modern firsts collecting and along with Arnold—who has also been accused of crimes against the book world—helped to shape the collecting field into a respected one. Chapter 3 focuses on the explosion of the modern firsts trend in 1920s America. As some celebrated the increased numbers of collectors who found their way to collecting through modern firsts, others fretted over the potential for the trend's popularity to taint the rarified world of collecting. Where chapters 2 and 3 look at collectors, the fourth chapter examines new issues that the modern firsts trend posed for authors, booksellers, and publishers. This chapter argues that, at the same time these groups were affected by (and lamenting about) the collecting of modern first editions, they were also shaping the trend. Finally, a coda considers the legacy of this period and its effects on the current status of modern firsts collecting.

In many ways, chapters 2 and 3 owe their inception to John Carter. Bookseller, bibliographer, and critic, Carter became well known in 1934 when, together with Graham Pollard, he published *An Enquiry into the Nature of Certain Nineteenth Century Pamphlets*, the book that exposed dozens of prized first edition pamphlets as forgeries and implicated Wise as their forger. Carter also wrote several studies on book collecting throughout the middle of the twentieth century, and between these, he has provided the most extensive treatment of the modern firsts trend. In Carter's discussions of the booms in modern firsts collecting, one gets the sense that there existed two types of modern firsts collectors. On the one hand, there were the "pioneers"—the individuals, as Carter explains, who first went against the tide by collecting

contemporary authors and who did so "consciously, with conviction and care." Among these pioneers he identifies the collectors at the center of chapter 2, Thomas James Wise and William Harris Arnold; he also names Harry Buxton Forman, Edmund Gosse, Charles B. Foote, and John Wrenn. In spite of their publicized wrongdoings, Wise and Arnold, along with these other collectors, were those who exhibited the "discrimination, connoisseurship and individuality of taste" that are the markers, for Carter, of "true bibliophily."[24]

And then, on the other hand, there were the "scores of lesser collectors"—those who, according to Carter, "clamour[ed] in the wake of their leaders" to obtain the books collected by the pioneers. Where Carter reveres the pioneer collectors, his disdain for these "lesser collectors" is unmistakable. He characterizes their earliest incarnations as an unruly mob, and by the time his history of the trend turns to 1920s America, these collectors have devolved, in his language, into ungulates: they are "unshepherded," suffering from "blinkerdom," and have formed an "undignified stampede" on the book-collecting world. Further still, he quips that among the "crowded ranks of the collectors of moderns … too many of these were 'suckers' of the purest vintage."[25]

In its recognition that any trend will have leaders and followers, my third chapter does not entirely dispute Carter's classifications. Furthermore, it acknowledges the presence among the newly crowded ranks of modern firsts collectors of those motivated by factors other than bibliophilia, and it gives voice to those, including Carter, who criticized the trend for its massive popularity. But

[24] Carter, *Taste and Technique*, 49.
[25] Carter and Pollard, *An Enquiry*, 103; Carter, *Taste and Technique*, 39, 40.

I am also interested in contextualizing those criticisms within broader debates that raged during the 1920s about the relationship between books, culture, and social privilege. Moreover, because I believe that the contempt held by Carter and other contemporary critics for these middle-class, middlebrow collectors has overshadowed the simple, even incredible fact of their existence, I also see this third chapter to some extent as a valorization of the "lesser" collector. This valorization comes not by relaying the voices of these collectors—unfortunately a challenging feat, given their silence in the historical record—but rather by examining discourses of cultural dominance: the question of who should be collecting gets debated in both specialized and popular publications throughout the 1920s. In fact, the third chapter's title, "Why Should I Not Have First Editions?", is indicative of this: the question comes not from a potential collector, but rather from what one commentator imagines a potential collector might think. This focus on discussions about the legitimacy of new collectors allows me to consider what internal contradictions within these arguments, as well as related contemporary concerns, reveal both about new collectors and those writing from positions of cultural dominance.

At the same time that I suggest a certain class of modern firsts book collectors has been overlooked, I also join other scholars in contending that, on the whole, book collectors have not received due examination for their roles in the history of the book.[26] Influential models of book history—including those proposed under the study known as the "sociology of texts," Robert Darnton's

[26] See, for instance, Mandelbrote, *Out of Print and Into Profit*, xv; Shaddy, *Books and Book Collecting in America*, 2; and Yeo, *Acquisition of Books by Chetham's Library*, 222

"communications circuit," and the subsequent revisions of that circuit—have certainly expanded understandings of the many players involved in what Darnton calls the "life cycle" of the book.[27] Where the history of the new book trade has remained a popular subject for historians of the book, however, comparatively few studies have focused on those who engage in the secondhand and antiquarian book trade, including book collectors. Yet as Giles Mandelbrote, Librarian and Archivist of Lambeth Palace Library, notes in one of the few considerations of this neglected subject, the trade in new books and the trade in secondhand books have always worked "in tandem, with the latter answering the need for cheaper copies and for copies of works that were no longer new."[28] I follow Mandelbrote in seeing a reciprocity between the worlds of "new books" and "old books." But, as I suggest here, the field of modern firsts—where the "old books" are in fact "new books"—offers a unique perspective for understanding the interactions between the worlds of the new and the old. At the same time that these worlds influenced collectors, the collecting of modern firsts had an impact that extended beyond the world of collecting and influenced the ways the book trade—both old and new—operated.

---

[27] Darnton's "communications circuit" considers the "life cycle" of the book, as it runs between the author, publisher, printer, distributors, readers, and back to the author. For Darnton, "book history concerns each phase of this process … in all its relations with other systems, economic, social, political, and cultural, in the surrounding environment." (Darnton, "What is the History of Books?," 11.) Subsequent modifications to this circuit posed by critics such as Thomas R. Adams and Nicolas Barker continue to emphasize the many agents at play in the production of printed texts while inverting Darnton's focus on those agents to reassert the centrality of the book (or what Adams and Baker call the "bibliographic document") in this cycle. (See Adams and Barker, "A New Model for the Study of the Book.")

[28] Mandelbrote, xv.

"The Time and the Place And the Loved One All Together": Scholars, Fans, and "The Nearness" of Modern First Editions

From its earliest existence in 1833, Robert Browning seemed poised to disown *Pauline*, his first publication: he published it anonymously, and throughout his life he acknowledged its authorship only with what he called "extreme repugnance." When Smith, Elder and Co. published Browning's collected works in 1868, he consented to include *Pauline* only because he knew that it was about to be published abroad and because at least in this context he could "introduce a boyish work with an exculpatory word."[1] Although *Pauline* did receive some sympathetic reviews upon publication, other negative reviews so mortified Browning that he, along with the help of his aunt, supposedly destroyed the stock of unsold copies. According to his aunt, there were many to destroy, which would not have come as much of a surprise to the author: Browning himself claimed that no one bought his first work, which appeared in brown drab boards with a plain printed paper label on its spine.[2]

Had anyone purchased the little book upon its publication, he or she would have paid 6*s*.

By 1896, a copy of *Pauline* was selling at auction for £145; in 1907, this same copy, which was bound in morocco and inscribed by Browning, sold for £225. These prices were common, and, in fact, copies that retained their original dingy covers tended to sell for even more: by 1905, one such copy sold for $1275,

[1] Browning, *Works* 1:xxi.
[2] On the history of *Pauline*, see Kennedy and Hair, *The Dramatic Imagination of Robert Browning*, 40-44, and Armstrong Browning Library (ABL), *The Brownings: A Research Guide*.

and its value would continue to soar at sales over the following decades before it entered the Berg Collection at New York Public Library.[3]

So what accounts for the sensational rise in the value of Browning's shabby little first book—an increase of nearly 900 times its selling price in under seventy-five years? On the face of it, the answer seems obvious: during those seventy-five years, Browning had become recognized as one of the greatest poets of the period, and by the time of his death in 1889, he was among the most famous people in the English-speaking world. From our perspective today, when it is unremarkable to hear of collectors seeking out first works by acclaimed authors in their original covers and jackets, it would seem unsurprising that *Pauline* should skyrocket in value. But such an understanding takes for granted the phenomenal changes in the climate of book collecting that cohered at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1833, when *Pauline* was published, the notion that within seventy-five years, this or any other contemporary title might become so highly valued was unimaginable. In fact, up through the century's end, the idea of treasuring the works of contemporaries was considered so unusual that the practice was labeled everything from "singular" to a "source of ridicule" in such popular publications as the *Cornhill* and the *Nineteenth Century*.[4]

---

[3] The first copy noted here is designated B0023 in the ABL census. It sold at the Crampon sale, 3 June 1896, and the Samuel sale, 1 July 1907; it was later acquired by Alexander H. Turnbull, who presented it to his library in New Zealand and from which it was subsequently stolen, circa 1950. The second copy noted here is ABL census number B0027. It passed through the following sales: Scott, 3 Dec. 1900 (£120); Arnold, 7 May. 1901 ($700); Butler, 10 Apr. 1905 ($1275); Ives, 6 Apr. 1915 ($1425); Wallace, 22 Mar. 1920 ($1,400); Kern, 7 Jan. 1929 ($16,000). In 1941, Dr. Albert A. Berg and Owen Young presented this copy to the New York Public Library. For more on the sales of *Pauline*, see ABL, *The Brownings: A Research Guide*, and De Ricci, *The Book Collector's Guide*, 77.

[4] Ellington, "Famous First Editions," 265; Roberts, "First Edition Mania," 347.

The question thus remains: what accounts for the spectacular surge in *Pauline*'s value—or in the values of other Browning first editions, or those by a dozen of his contemporaries, including Alfred Tennyson, Charles Dickens, W. M. Thackeray, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, D. G. Rossetti, John Ruskin, and A. C. Swinburne? Why was this the point at which—to adapt a line from another Robert Browning work—the time, and the place, and the loved one all came together?[5]

To answer this question requires a broader consideration of some other firsts of the period. If these authors were the first to see their early works rise in the book collecting market, they were also among the first authors to witness scholarly treatments of their works, and they were also among a new era of literary celebrity. Indeed, an examination of changing attitudes at the turn of the century toward scholarship and authors, as well as toward books themselves, offers a useful lens by which to view the emergence of modern firsts collecting. Among these factors, a developing interest in the scholarly study of contemporary authors deserves particular attention. This is not to say that scholarly concerns motivated all collectors, and, as we will see, many shunned intellectual justifications for collecting. Still, collecting modern books arose alongside and often in the service of the study of their authors. Even as the trend's opponents questioned the literary longevity of contemporary writers, collectors engaged in shaping a literary historiography that understood the present as an important historical age.

[5] "Never the time and the place / And the loved one all together!" The poem first appeared in *Jocoseria* (1883).

Scholars, Collectors, and the Making of Modern Literary History

Although the final decades of the nineteenth century saw the consolidation of English studies as an academic discipline, substantial literary scholarship continued to take place outside the academy. One significant venue for this non-academic scholarly work was the literary society, which, in the late nineteenth century, increasingly took the form of organizations focused on single authors. There were societies devoted to early English literary masters, including Chaucer and Shakespeare, but more numerous were the organizations centered on nineteenth-century authors: the Ruskin Society began in 1879, followed over the next twenty years by societies dedicated to William Wordsworth, Robert Browning, P. B. Shelley, and the Brontës. Interest in these single-author societies was so widespread that the founding organizations often served as prototypes for societies in other locations. Such was the case of the Ruskin Society, which began in Manchester and was followed by the founding of societies dedicated to the author in London, Glasgow, Liverpool, Birmingham, and the Isle of Man, not to mention societies in the United States and Canada. Browning societies likewise proliferated across Britain and North America, with more than 100 in existence by the end of the nineteenth century.[6]

If this popularity betrays an affinity between single-author societies of the late nineteenth century and modern-day fan clubs (to be explored later in this chapter), it is nevertheless the case that these societies originated from

[6] The spread of these societies is outlined in Carter and Pollard, *An Enquiry*, 102; Collingwood, *Life of John Ruskin*, 394; and Murray, *Come, Bright Improvement!*, 142. On the proliferation of Browning societies, see Hair and Kennedy, *The Dramatic Imagination of Robert Browning*, 366.

intellectual interests.[7] Emphasis on serious study resounds throughout the charters and other founding documents of late-nineteenth-century single-author societies. And a distinct influence on this scholarly focus was a figure central to the founding of several literary societies, Frederick Furnivall. Delightfully irascible (he frequently engaged in disputes and was not above name-calling, dubbing Swinburne "Pigsbrook" in one famous incident) and exceedingly industrious (he had a hand in founding and running a total of seven literary societies between 1864 and 1885), Furnivall promoted literary societies as important outlets for scholarly research and publication.[8] The (London) Browning Society, for instance, which Furnivall helped to found, proclaimed a scholarly outlook in its printed objectives: these included "the study and discussion of his works, and the Publication of Papers on them, and extracts from works illustrating them."[9] In addition to Furnivall and his co-founder, the Irish poet Emily Hickey, Browning Society members included professors and university lecturers such as William J. Alexander and R. G. Moulton; figures well known in contemporary London literary circles, such as George Bernard Shaw, William Michael Rossetti, Eleanor Marx, Arthur Symons, and Annie Elizabeth Ireland; several women involved in education reform and the suffrage movement, including Dorothea Beale, Frances Buss, Anna Swanwick, and C. M. Whitehead; as well as members whose legacies outside their activities in the Browning Society are more difficult to trace—many of them women—including Florence Bourne,

[7] In fact, intellectual interests continue to dominate author societies today, and their memberships are increasingly composed of academics. See, for instance, the author societies that form the American Literature Association.
[8] See Lee, "Furnivall, Frederick James."
[9] Furnivall, "Prospectus of the Browning Society" [in *A Bibliography of Robert Browning*], 20.

Helen Omerod, and a Miss Wilson.[10] The Society's primary activity was its monthly meetings at University College, London, "for the hearing and discussion of a Paper or Address on some of Browning's poems or his characteristics," and in these papers, later published in the Society's proceedings, members drew on various critical methodologies, from aesthetic interpretation, to textual studies, to historical and biographical criticism.[11]

Among the most prominent of the societies' scholarly activities was the compiling and publishing of author-bibliographies, accounts of a single author's printed works. Ubiquitous today, author-bibliographies were reserved throughout much of the nineteenth century for only a handful of early English authors—Shakespeare, Milton, Philip Sidney, and Edmund Spenser. In the 1870s, though, the circle of authors receiving bibliographical attention began to expand with the appearance of hand-lists devoted to the works of Dickens, Tennyson, and Thackeray; by the 1880s, these hand-lists had evolved into more elaborate and technical author-bibliographies, and their subjects grew to feature other nineteenth-century authors.[12] Included in these were bibliographies published by author societies: the Browning Society published Furnivall's bibliography of the poet's works in 1881, while Harry Buxton Forman's *A Shelley Library* appeared under the Shelley Society's imprint in 1886. And even when they were not published by author societies, author-bibliographies were frequently the products of society members. Most prolific among these was

[10] I have drawn the names of Browning Society members from their published proceedings, *The Browning Society's Papers*, 1889-1891.
[11] Furnivall, "Prospectus of the Browning Society" [in *A Bibliography of Robert Browning*], 20. For more on the critical approaches typically taken by nineteenth-century author-societies, see Murray, *Come, Bright Improvement!,* 140.
[12] See Carter, *Taste and Technique*, 15-16.

Thomas J. Wise, compiler of a dozen bibliographies devoted to single authors, including Robert Browning, Swinburne, and Wordsworth. By the early years of the new century, bibliographies of the works of Matthew Arnold, William Morris, D. G. Rossetti, Robert Stevenson, and other modern authors had appeared.[13]

Besides serving as valuable forms of scholarship themselves, author-bibliographies were recognized as important foundations for the scholarly studies undertaken by author society members. As Furnivall would proclaim in his *Bibliography of Robert Browning*, "no one can well set to work at a man's writings till a list of them is before him, and he knows the order of their publishing."[14] Compilers noted that author-bibliographies usefully depicted an author's literary evolution, and to this end, many bibliographies chronologically inventoried their subjects' literary productions while they also presented publication histories and biographical details. At the same time, in addition to being aimed at critics, the bibliographies also recommended themselves to collectors and potential collectors, serving as lists of desiderata and as means for identifying first editions through the supplying of collations, title page transcriptions, typographical descriptions, and other bibliographic details. W. F. Prideaux, who published a Stevenson bibliography in 1903, acknowledged this dual purpose behind his work as he "endeavoured to meet the views of both the student and of the collector."[15] But while Prideaux acknowledged separate

[13] In addition to Wise's bibliographies, see, for instance, Thomas B. Smart's *Bibliography of Matthew Arnold* (1892), R. H. Shepherd's *Bibliography of Tennyson* (1896), Temple Scott's *Bibliography of the Works of William Morris* (1897), F. L. Knowles's *A Kipling Primer* (1899), W. F. Prideaux's *Bibliography of the Works of Robert Louis Stevenson* (1903), and W. M. Rossetti's *Bibliography of the Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (1905).
[14] Furnivall, *Bibliography of Robert Browning*, 25
[15] Prideaux, *Bibliography of the Works of Robert Louis Stevenson*, vii.

interests behind critics and collectors, it is important to note that the student and the collector of modern authors were actually often one and the same. As a matter of fact, in addition to engaging in the scholarly activity of compiling a bibliography, Prideaux himself was also a collector, as were other compilers, including Wise and Furnivall. Furthermore, many author societies considered the discovery, collection, and preservation of an author's oeuvre central to their intellectual mandate.

Through their activities, then, these scholar-collectors of contemporary authors were both influenced by, and contributing to, an English literary historiography, emerging over the nineteenth century, that treated the present as part of history. This shift in perspective is brought into relief by setting William Hazlitt's "On the Living Poets," published in 1818, alongside Harry Buxton Forman's *Our Living Poets*, published in 1871. Although Hazlitt concludes his *Lectures on the English Poets*—including Chaucer, Milton, and Pope—with some remarks on living poets, he does so hesitatingly: personal relationships with these poets constrain him, but so do his needs for the "verdict of posterity" and protection against "what may turn out to be false bottoms." By the essay's end, he appears to regret even embarking on the subject, gloomily observing that "interest has unavoidably decreased at almost every successive step of the progress, like a play that has its catastrophe in the first or second act."[16] Forman, on the other hand, writing just over fifty years later, shares none of Hazlitt's reservations about placing living authors within the continuum of literary history; rather, he refers expressly to the "literary history of the past few years,"

[16] Hazlitt, *Lectures on the English Poets*, 298, 297, 342.

specifying the present as an "epoch of no small splendour."[17] His readiness to canonize modern authors is emphasized further still by his taxonomical treatment of his subjects: Tennyson and Browning are of the Idyllic and Psychological schools respectively; D. G. Rossetti leads the Preraphaelites, while Swinburne and Morris are Renaissance poets.

By using these designations, Forman was enacting what Robin Gilmour, in his study of Victorian culture, regards as a fervor beginning with the early Victorians for characterizing the present age. According to Gilmour, "no previous generation of people had been so conscious of the uniqueness of the times they were living through …, so drawn to compare themselves with their ancestors, or so aware of the time as an 'age' requiring definition."[18] Significantly, this consciousness translated into attempts to approach the present literary age in the same manner as historians treated the past. To Furnivall, for instance, whose early scholarly pursuits had centered on previous literary periods, his eventual desire to study contemporary authors was "only natural."[19] The emergence of this new model of literary history, in which contemporary authors seemed always poised to become part of an ever-evolving literary past, resulted in several activities aimed at documenting the literary present. These included such publications as *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Wise and W. Robertson Nicoll, which brought together biographical essays, publication histories, bibliographies, and unpublished texts; its two volumes included, for example, correspondence from Ruskin, a short story by a fourteen-

[17] Forman, *Our Living Poets*, 3.
[18] Gilmour, *The Victorian Period*, 2
[19] Furnivall, *How the Browning Society Came Into Being*, 1.

year-old Charlotte Brontë, and a list of suppressed Rudyard Kipling works. Subtitled "Contributions Toward a Literary History of the Period," the work followed a similar series covering the eighteenth century. Yet where the earlier series first appeared in 1812, the publication of *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century* in 1895—that is, five years before the century's close—signals late Victorians' eagerness to document their own literary history.[20]

This same desire to scrutinize and chronicle the present literary moment provoked the collecting of modern first editions. Collectors of contemporary authors saw themselves advancing the study of literary history by documenting publications, compiling bibliographies, and rescuing early or otherwise little-known works from historical oblivion. In framing their collecting activities as scholarly endeavors, collectors of modern books, like collectors of modern literary anecdotes (and actually they were often one and the same), were following a tradition, cultivated at the end of the eighteenth century by such men-of-letters as Isaac D'Israeli, that promoted a populist approach to literary history. The man of letters, as represented by D'Israeli, served an intermediary function between author and reader, combining amateurism with erudition to preserve and transmit literary history. By many accounts, this populist approach was eclipsed in the 1880s by the professionalization of English studies.[21] Yet it endured at the turn of the century in the activities of self-declared scholars and collectors of modern literature, who pursued the study of recent authors before university English departments collectively began to do so. In other words, the

[20] Nicoll and Wise, eds., *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century* (2 vols., 1895-96), and Nichols, ed., *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century* (6 vols., 1812-16).
[21] See, for instance, Connell, "Bibliomania," 34, and Guillory, "Literary Study and the Modern System of the Disciplines," 32-33.

activities of these collectors suggest that there were in fact two models of scholarship operating at the century's end: that of modern firsts collectors, for whom the present was about to become part of the past, and that of professional academics, whose understanding of scholarship centered on studying a safely distanced, enshrined past.

To be sure, while a flurry of extra-academic scholarly activity surrounded modern authors at the nineteenth century's close, the status of modern literature within the academy was at best conflicted—as illustrated by the fate of William Lyon Phelps's modern novels course. Offered at Yale in 1895, "Modern Novels" instructed students in the novel as a form of literary art and as a reflection of contemporary thought. This method, with its focus on criticism, diverged from the philological scholarship that still tended to dominate English departments, but it was the study of modern authors that made Phelps's course particularly noteworthy. Authors covered in "Modern Novels" included Thomas Hardy, George Meredith, Stevenson, Kipling, and Mrs. Humphrey Ward. Against assumptions that a course on these and other contemporary authors would be unchallenging, Phelps set rigorous requirements: students read one novel a week and submitted weekly written "critical judgments" in exchange for minimal course credit. Notwithstanding the strenuous workload, "Modern Novels" was Yale's most highly attended elective course in 1895, and the American and British presses reported on its popularity and its "novel" subject—a pun they found irresistible. "The electives in English hardly received an average amount of interest from upperclassmen up to two years ago," a *New York Times* profile of the course observed. "The sudden rise in so short a space of time to a course with

an average attendance of over 300 is an indication of the change that is taking place at the university." Yale's faculty members, however, were not ready for this change: despite a huge public outcry, they abolished the course after one year upon the belief that students should spend their time on subjects "more substantial than the modern novel," such as classics and history. Modern poetry courses fared slightly better, but overall, professors tended to doubt the quality of modern literature.[22]

Standard Reproaches and Scholarly Rationales

Like Phelps, modern literature collectors faced objections about the quality of their chosen subject. The modern firsts trend was criticized from its start for inflating the value of modern literature, an argument made, for one, by William Roberts, who wrote about book collecting for various publications. Roberts was also the most vocal—and the most wonderfully expressive—detractor of collecting modern first editions. In an 1894 diatribe published in the *Fortnightly Review*, he disputed the merit of modern literary works, quipping that modern literature seemed to "spread over the greatest amount of space the smallest quantity of original thought."[23] Others similarly questioned the lasting literary value of modern authors popular among collectors, particularly as the circle of collected authors began to expand: for instance, an *Athenaeum* review of J. H. Slater's

[22] "Yale and Dr. W. L. Phelps," 15; "Modern Novels at Yale," 16. For more on Phelps and "Modern Novels," see Graff, *Professing Literature*, Kimball, "Dr. Phelps and His 'Novel' Course," and Phelps, *Essays on Modern Novelists*. Graff additionally cites author-societies as significant forerunners of literary studies as they provided venues for the discussion of literature at a time that universities were not. (*Professing Literature*, 44). For more on the relationship between author-societies and universities, see Murray, *Come, Bright Improvement!* and Steeves, *Learned Societies and English Literary Scholarship*.

[23] Roberts, "First Edition Mania," 347. Parts of this article had appeared in "Rare Books and Their Prices" (1893) and would appear subsequently in an 1895 book by the same title.

Early Editions: A Bibliographical Survey of the Works of Some Popular Modern Authors, the first handbook for collectors of modern first editions, complained of the authors included that "less than a moiety have produced works which have the least chance of taking a permanent place in literature"; that the handbook featured ten living authors was of particular issue for the reviewer.[24] Andrew Lang, who wrote popularly on bibliographical subjects, concurred that "we are in too great a hurry to canonise contemporaries."[25]

Ironically, Lang was among the ten living authors featured in Slater's handbook, and his works—particularly his original poetry and his fairy tale collections—became popular with collectors during the 1890s. Moreover, Lang was one of the living or recently deceased authors Roberts cited as undeserving of the attention collectors had recently shown them. "Why any sane collector should aspire to possess complete sets of the first editions of [Lang or Richard Jefferies] heaven only knows," he huffed, "for many of these essentially ephemeral volumes will be as dead to the next generation as John Dennis's animadversions on Pope and Addison are to the present."[26] Although a bookseller's price—quoted by Roberts as a matter of ridicule—for a complete set of Lang's forty first editions was likely high at £30, the values of his books had indeed risen exponentially among collectors by the final decade of the nineteenth century. In 1880, for example, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, and Co. issued

[24] "Early Editions" [Review], 673.
[25] Lang, *The Library*, xiv.
[26] Roberts, "First Edition Mania," 352.

Lang's *XXXII Ballades in Blue China* at 3*s* 6*d*; ten years later, it was regularly selling at auction for £1 6*s*.[27]

According to Roberts, modern firsts collectors exalted authors with no lasting literary merit. But, he claimed, even when they did collect authors deserving of posterity, the standards by which they ranked these authors' works were skewed. Here he was referring to a collecting impulse closely associated with the modern firsts trend, the preference for an author's earliest works. As auction and bookseller records reflect, at the same time that collectors became interested in modern authors, they also began privileging these authors' earliest works over their celebrated titles. Along with Robert Browning's *Pauline*, collectors revered Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *The Battle of Marathon* (W. Lindsell, 1820), Alfred and Charles Tennyson's *Poems By Two Brothers* (J. and J. Jackson, 1827), Swinburne's *The Queen Mother* and *Rosamond* (Pickering, 1860), Kipling's *Schoolboy Lyrics* (privately printed, 1881), and D. G. Rossetti's *Sir Hugh the Heron*. This last title was a ballad narrative begun by the author at age twelve and published on his grandfather's private press three years later. Issued in small quarto pamphlet form, the work is just twenty-four pages; Rossetti's name appears as "Gabriel Rossetti, Junior" on the title page. Only a handful of copies were printed, and as with Browning and *Pauline*, Rossetti hated his first work, later destroying many copies and calling the work "ridiculous" and "absurd trash." William Michael Rossetti, who did not include *Sir Hugh* in his collected editions of his brother's works, agreed that "it is correctly enough

[27] *BPC* 4:132 [King sale, Dec. 1890]. Slater quoted a similar price for *XXXII Ballades in Blue China* in *Early Editions* (154), although at the Feb. 1895 Charles B. Foote sale, a copy went for the remarkable price of $19.00 (*APBC* 2:577).

versified, but has no merit, and little that could even be called promise."[28] In spite of this resounding denunciation of the work's literary value, *Sir Hugh* was highly sought by collectors. Throughout the 1890s, the juvenile composition consistently sold at a higher price than Rossetti's other works: in 1890, when the pamphlet was first recorded at auction, it went for £16 while his *Poems* (F. S. Ellis, 1870) brought £6 10*s*; by 1896, the New York bookseller Dodd, Mead was offering a copy of *Sir Hugh* for $150.[29]

For those who opposed the collecting of modern authors, these high figures for works of no recognized literary value were all the more absurd in light of the comparatively paltry sums being paid for the established treasures of classical literature. "It is simply sickening to read of these flatulent little *biblia abiblia* selling for long prices," Roberts flared in one of his more bloated rants, "with such superb masterpieces of the Aldine Press as a vellum copy (one of three known) of Cicero's *De Officiis* going for £5; … the *editiones principes* of Herodotus or Strabo, for £3 15*s*. each; of Horace, for £1; … and of hundreds of others which may be cited."[30] Others similarly invoked the contrast between prices for classical and modern literature to signal a revolution in collecting habits. An 1890 *Times* article about recent sales was typical in noting that "while the unpopularity of old theology and ancient classics continued, there was a marked movement in favour of first editions, when clean and uncut, of modern works, especially those of Dickens, Thackeray and other prominent English

[28] Rossetti, *DGR: His Family Letters*, 85; *Complete Poetical Works*, xx.
[29] *APB* 4:30 [Sotheby's, 10 Dec. 1890]; Dodd, Mead, *Short-Title Catalogue*.
[30] Roberts, "First Edition Mania," 354.

authors."[31] And for those who objected to the modern firsts trend, this movement away from the classics and toward modern literature signaled a more general cultural degradation—the same sentiment driving the abolition of Phelps's "Modern Novels" course. "Booksellers now rarely think it worth while to give the height of an Elzevir or to devote a note to an Aldus," a *New York Times* writer lamented. "The first editions of the classics, which in the days of our grandfathers were the collector's chief pride, are now fallen from their high estate."[32]

If objectors denounced the literary value of modern firsts, the trend's early advocates were less concerned with supporting it on these grounds.[33] Instead, a significant line of defense for collecting modern firsts was the activity's value to scholarship. In fact, supporters dwelled on the idea that it was precisely the lack of literary value that made certain works important for literary scholars. This was the argument offered by an anonymous response to Roberts's attack, which was published in the *Speaker* and specifically took issue with Roberts's disdain for the collecting of an author's earliest works. For the *Speaker* writer, Roberts's "standards of value are quite out of place" expressly because they are based on literary value and ignore a more significant marker of worth: historical value. Answering Roberts's claim that collectors have placed undue weight on authors' early works—"some worthless tract" or an "obsolete and ephemeral magazine

[31] "Literary and Numismatic Sales of 1889."
[32] "Prices for Books."
[33] Certainly, there were some who celebrated the collecting of modern firsts as a means of recognizing literary worth. A. W. Pollard congratulated those who collected modern authors on "encourag[ing] the good literature of their own day" (*Books in the House*, 13). Slater, while acknowledging "arbitrary," "irrational," and "absurd" elements of the trend, nevertheless saw the collecting of modern literature as important in granting their authors a "respect [they] might seek for in vain elsewhere" (*Early Editions*, 151).

article," as Roberts denounced them—the *Speaker* writer contended that these early works are "sure to have a legitimate interest for the literary student. The crude efforts of a great writer cannot be 'worthless,'" the writer insisted, "to the critic who traces the evolution of genius." The *Speaker* writer thus sought to validate scholar-collectors' activities as substantial to the study of literary history.[34]

Appeals to the literary scholar's needs underwrote another major defense for collecting first editions: their importance in preserving textual accuracy. Those making this argument emphasized the need for protecting an author's original writing. Against claims like Roberts's that the first edition was "generally the worst," these commentators maintained that alterations in subsequent editions could mean the loss of valuable original material, even when the author was responsible for these edits.[35] Lang, for instance, cited Tennyson's *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* as evidence for this position: published in 1830 by Effingham Wilson, the volume included the popular "Mariana," which Tennyson revised for subsequent collections. For Lang, although Tennyson's later edits may have improved the poem, the 1830 volume preserved "pieces of which the execution is less certain," making the first edition indispensable for studying the poem's textual evolution.[36]

Further still, in its unmediated state—untouched by later revisions—the first edition was, for some, what Lang identified as the "authentic text."[37] This belief was espoused by the American modern firsts collector William Harris

[34] Roberts, "First Edition Mania" 349; "First Editions," 279.
[35] Roberts, "First Edition Mania," 347
[36] Lang, *The Library*, 22.
[37] Ibid., 21.

Arnold, who addressed the question "Why First Editions?" in an 1898 essay by that title (and whose collecting practices chapter 2 will explore in more detail). Among various answers, Arnold dwelled on the genuineness of the first edition's text, which he saw as maintaining the "pristine freshness" of an author's original thought.[38] Leon Vincent, in his introduction to Arnold's 1901 sale catalogue, elaborated on the view that first editions more honestly reflected their authors' meanings: "Real authorship is unconscious in a way. The man of letters does not say to himself, 'Now I am in the act of making a first edition'; he is more solicitous about what he is writing than about the outward form which his work is to take. He is more anxious to be carefully printed than he is to be elegantly printed."[39] According to Arnold, it was precisely this unmediated, "unconscious" quality that made first editions vital to the literary student's "full understanding of the writer's meaning." By the logic guiding Arnold's argument, then, the first edition's text provided the literary scholar access not just to the author's earliest thought but rather, and more significant, to his or her truest thought. Furthermore, for Arnold, the first edition "affords to the student what is usually the closest possible approach to the mind of the writer."[40] Truly understanding an author's meaning, in Arnold's formulation, is thus a matter of figurative proximity between the student and the author's mind, made possible by the first edition's text.

"So Close to the Author Himself": Modern Firsts and the Literary Fan

[38] Arnold, *First Report*, 20.
[39] Vincent, "The Collector's Point of View," xii.
[40] Arnold, *First Report*, 19.

At the same time that William Harris Arnold upheld the scholarly merits of the first edition's text, he did not neglect the first edition's appeal as an object. Where the first edition's text could create a particular relationship between author and student for Arnold, he and other modern firsts collectors saw the material object of the first edition as still another, more sacred conduit. Arnold touched upon this idea in a discussion of the allure of Keats first editions:

> From his letters, and from the written reminiscences of his friends, we know what hopes and fears were joined to these books; and numerous as have been the succeeding editions, what one of them, sumptuous though it be, would the possessor of the three books in their original simple forms accept in exchange for any of these that bring us so close to the author himself?[41]

Up to this point, Arnold's essay had dwelled on the scholarly benefits of collecting first editions. But his hypothetical question signals another powerful motivation behind the collecting of modern firsts, one revealed in meaningful shifts in his reasoning. First, the literary student of Arnold's earlier discussion is replaced here by the new figure of the possessor—that is, the collector. And, second, where the student achieves a connection to the writer through the first edition's text, the collector gains his proximity to the writer through the material object of the first edition. Arnold's earlier triangulation of writer, text, and student is thus transformed here, becoming now writer, *book*, and *collector*. Furthermore, the proximity created by the first edition as an object is of a different, more palpable nature: the collector doesn't just obtain "the closest possible approach to the

[41] Arnold, *First Report*, 21.

author's mind" as the student did with the first edition's text; instead, by possessing the first edition, the collector is "close to the author himself." In other words, in this formulation—common among collectors of first editions—the first edition is a relic, sanctified by a certain nearness to the author and, through the act of ownership, bringing the collector nearer to the author's personal self.

If collectors sought to achieve nearness to authors through first editions, this desire coincides with an important cultural reconfiguration occurring over the nineteenth century: an increasing veneration of the author—or what Harry B. Smith, the American stage composer who began collecting contemporary first editions in the 1890s, readily identified as collecting "founded on reverence and hero-worship."[42] The rise of the literary celebrity during the nineteenth century was marked by a growing fascination with authors' lives and personalities. Popular publications in Britain and the US increasingly carried biographical profiles of writers alongside reviews of current literature; in addition to details about authors' early lives, readers devoured information about where writers lived, what objects they owned, and what clothes they wore. By the 1890s, the newly begun *Bookman*, motivated by the popular appetite for literary gossip as well as advances in photomechanical reproduction, was inserting full-page portraits of favorite contemporary authors in its monthly issues. These forms of media coverage marked a growing inclination, as David Blake aptly puts it, "to elevate persona over content"—to privilege authors' lives, over their works, as an important source of connection for readers.[43]

---

[42] Smith, *Sentimental Library*, xiv.
[43] Blake, *Walt Whitman and the Culture of Celebrity*, 42. In addition to Blake, the following sources have informed my knowledge of nineteenth-century literary celebrity: Eisner, *Nineteenth-*

Recent critical work has begun to recover the range of cultural practices arising from nineteenth-century literary fandom, which tended to focus on living or recently deceased authors. In *The Brontë Myth*, Lucasta Miller observes the late-nineteenth-century boom in Brontë relics, as devotees of the sisters eagerly snatched up their household effects at auction upon Reverend Brontë's death and despoiled Haworth Parsonage of everything down to its woodwork. Christoph Irmscher's *Longfellow Redux* documents some of the many thousand fan letters that inundated the poet, leaving him to feel "up to my armpits" in correspondence from admirers. And Nicola Watson has investigated the nineteenth-century culture of literary tourism that sent besotted fans on pilgrimages to the homes and haunts of their favorite authors.[44]

The growth of modern firsts collecting was yet another product of this emergent fan culture. Like those hunting down the Brontës' soup bowls or seeking a glimpse of Kipling's Vermont home, first editions collectors fetishized physical objects associated with authors. As such, they provided a peculiar twist on the growing phenomenon of stressing authors' lives at the expense of their works—or what Leah Price has termed the "surrender of bibliography to biography."[45] These collectors explicitly did not surrender bibliography to biography; rather, for them, bibliography and biography were inseparable: on one level, books were central to their activities, as they attempted to assemble authors' entire oeuvres in their first edition form; on still another level, the value

---

Century Poetry and Literary Celebrity; Mole, ed., *Romanticism and Celebrity Culture*; Salmon, "Signs of Intimacy"; and Stetz, *Facing the Late Victorians*.

[44] See Miller, *The Brontë Myth*, chapter 4; Irmscher, *Longfellow Redux*, chapter 1; Watson, *The Literary Tourist*.

[45] Price, "From Ghostwriter to Typewriter," 230.

of these first editions inhered in a metonymic link between book and author that, through the act of ownership, provided a proximity between author and collector. Yet even as collectors extolled this relationship, they often struggled to define the nature of the nearness first editions created. This difficulty is likely to blame for J. H. Slater's implausible suggestion, in *How To Collect Books*, that "the author has in the vast majority of cases seen and handled the book for which he was himself responsible; the very copy we hold in our hand may have belonged to him." Slater, that is, portrayed authors frequently coming into contact with their own first editions—a possibility that, though slight, was nonetheless hopefully echoed by others.[46]

However, many claimed that the nearness to the author effected by the first edition was beyond discussing with anyone who did not naturally intuit this relationship. This was the position held by Harry B. Smith, whose recommendation that collectors avoid conversation on the matter belies his trouble explaining this nearness. "Do not tell such a man that a first edition brings you nearer to the author," Smith counseled collectors. "He will ask, 'Why nearer to the author?' and you will be lured into a maze of subtleties." In fact, for those who shared Smith's view, to analyze these "whys" of collecting first editions ran counter to the entire enterprise because collecting first editions should depend foremost on feeling rather than logic. "Should any worthy troglodyte try to hold you with his skinny hand and glittering eye to ask you, 'Why first

[46] Slater, *How To Collect Books*, 182. One case to which Slater's supposition could be accurately applied is the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, and the book's later fame depended significantly on Whitman's having assisted in its printing. A line in the book's farewell dictum, "So Long," added by the third edition (1860)—"Camerado, this is no book, / Who touches this, touches a man"—further capitalizes on this presumed physical connection between author and book (Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, 422).

editions?' do not rage against him nor despitefully use him," Smith advised half-teasingly, "but with a superior smile pass on, pitying rather than scorning.... If a man's mind can be so uncouthly practical that he can think of asking, 'Why first editions?,' he is beyond the reach of sentimental argument."[47] This privileging of sentiment over practicality resounded with many collectors of modern first editions. Even the *Speaker* writer who had built a case for the scholarly merit in collecting modern firsts ultimately upheld the "spiritual joy" that guided collectors. Exasperated by the "superfluity of rationalism" in Roberts's attack on the first edition mania, the *Speaker* writer denounced the futility of questioning a collector's choice, "as if it were the business of the collector to justify himself before some tribunal of all the virtues, or else be for ever banished from the sight of self-respecting man."[48]

Like Smith, the *Speaker* writer demarcated two approaches—one sentimental, the other rational—and both writers aligned themselves with the sentimentalists. By framing their arguments within this us-versus-them dichotomy and moreover by identifying with the sentimental view, these defendants of modern firsts collecting were adopting what Matt Hills usefully characterizes as the "imagined subjectivity" of fandom. Fans, of course, are not a homogenous group: in addition to distinct areas of interest, they have individual aims and purposes. Nevertheless, as Hills contends in his study of modern fan cultures, fandom is bounded by its own "guiding discourses and ideals of subjectivity": for fans, "good" subjectivity is thus characterized by an openly

[47] Smith, *Sentimental Library*, xiii.
[48] "First Editions," 279.

emotional engagement with one's object of interest. Hills focuses on the symbiosis between fans and another group deeply invested in culture, academics, and he considers how the two groups rely on one another to delineate their own imagined subjectivities. Indeed, the very qualities constituting the "good" subjectivity of academics—rationality, objectivity—are refracted in fans' definitions of what they are not: hyper-rational, apathetic. Similarly, for academics, "bad" subjectivity—one that is too emotionally invested and even obsessive—depends on a pathologizing of fandom.[49]

In their arguments for collecting modern firsts, and specifically in denigrating their opponents' perspectives as rational, Smith and the *Speaker* writer anticipated the language and ideological prejudices of modern fandom. Note, however, that these defendants of collecting modern firsts were not positioning themselves against scholars. The *Speaker* writer, for example, while ultimately upholding a fannish devotion to collecting modern firsts had, earlier in the essay, supported his collecting preference based on its scholarly merits, justifying the usefulness of certain modern firsts to literary history. William Harris Arnold likewise vacillated between rational and sentimental justifications for collecting first editions. To some extent, that these modern firsts collectors resist easy alignment with either scholars or fans signals a broader ambivalence about the act of collecting in general, one that abounds in not only academic treatments of collectors but also collectors' own descriptions of their activities: on the one hand, collectors are often characterized as "connoisseurs," whose engagement in an activity that "generat[es] knowledge" mirrors academic

[49] Hills, *Fan Cultures*, 8.

practices; on the other hand, collectors are also depicted, like fans, as "infatuated" devotees driven by emotion and ardor. And perhaps more than any other type of collector, book collectors merge the worlds of both scholarship and fandom. While collecting books has a clear association with learning and knowledge, book collecting has long been pathologized as a form of madness.[50]

But the difficulty of classifying turn-of-the-century defenses of collecting modern firsts as either fannish or scholarly by modern standards also reflects the circumstances in which modern literature was being studied—primarily, that is, outside the academy and within the single-author society. Certainly, while late-nineteenth-century author societies often originated from scholarly motives, and while they uncovered and preserved valuable historical, biographical, and bibliographical material, society members also engaged in activities typical of the literary fan: early subscribers to *Saint George*, the organ of the Ruskin Society of Birmingham, received full-page engravings of the author not unlike the celebrity-style portraits later featured in the *Bookman*,[51] while members of the Browning

[50] Baudrillard, "The System of Collecting," 10; Belk, "Collectors and Collecting," 320; Muensterberger, *Collecting: An Unruly Passion*, 3. These quotes are cited by MacLeod, "Romps with Ransom's King," 119-20. In its consideration of the relationship between collectors, scholars, and fans, MacLeod's article anticipates my own study. MacLeod helpfully catalogues treatments of collectors in academic discourse, and she contends that collectors "fall somewhere between fans and academics" in these discussions (119). I would argue, however, that while it might be possible to locate collectors on some sort of trajectory between fans and academics, it is important to recognize that collectors can adopt the qualities of both groups at once. Furthermore, as I suggest here, scholars, fans, and collectors should be understood as historically variable categories.

[51] And not unlike, one imagines, the "first-class" engraving of Ruskin "suitable for framing" advertised on the back wrapper of a study of Ruskin by Edmund J. Baillie, an early member of the Ruskin Society. Scholarship and fandom were even further entwined in this case by the fact that Baillie's study originally appeared in *House and Home*, a short-lived journal dedicated to "interesting biographical sketches of celebrities." See Baillie, *John Ruskin*.

Society sent the poet doting fan letters.[52] Moreover, the act of relic collecting—an explicit mandate of the Brontë Society, for one—consolidated the aims of the scholar and the fan: members saw themselves as preserving important literary-historical materials while, at the same time, they highlighted the devotional underpinnings of their work by identifying these materials as relics.[53]

Among collectors operating as both scholars and fans, there was perhaps no greater prize than the first edition of an author's earliest work. The scarcity of authors' earliest works—an informal 1899 census of *Pauline* placed the total extant copies at eleven—clearly factored in their value.[54] But collectors also upheld the intrinsic interest of these materials, and these arguments tended to run along two, sometimes converging lines: even as early editions were defended as important literary-historical evidence, their association with authors before they found fame made these books potent relics. "Bibliophiles cherish their [earliest] first editions of Keats, Shelley, Tennyson, Swinburne, and Morris for the sentiment which clings about them," one turn-of-the-century commentator explained. "Here is the famous poem as it looked to the author in days when the great reputation had not yet been made, when the poet himself little dreamed that his name was to be a household name."[55] That a book was published prior to an author's celebrity provoked in collectors a powerful urge to visualize the author's emotional response to the book's physical presence. One collector

---

[52] Additionally, by dint of their very focus on a single author, many societies were accused of letting an obsessive attention to one individual obscure their scholarly aims. See, for instance, Steeves, *Learned Societies and English Literary Scholarship*.
[53] Brontë Society, *Transactions*, 10.
[54] Livingston, "First Books of Some English Authors," 79. The ABL census, which is the most current census of *Pauline*, places the number of extant copies at 23.
[55] Vincent, "The Collector's Point of View," xii-xiii.

imagined with "what heart-fluttering, with what ecstatic apprehension" an author would handle his first published book, "on which his hopes were formed … and his ambitions builded," and surmised that "surely something of this spirit is communicated to the collector." Through this scene, the collector is permitted to share an (imagined) intimacy with an author, made pleasurable not only by the collector's being privy to the author's personal wishes but also by the collector's satisfaction in knowing the results of those dreams. And the physical form of the first edition is cast again as a conduit, in this case assuming the role of transmitter of the author's "spirit" and thus provider of the intimacy collectors sought.[56]

In this collector's fantasy, the author's spirit seems to imbue all first edition copies, regardless of any physical contact between author and copy. Yet where these copies might have a symbolic connection to their authors, association copies could prove an actual physical relationship between an author and a book. *ABC for Book Collectors*, the classic reference source, defines an association copy as one "which once belonged to, or was annotated by, the author; which once belonged to someone connected with the author or someone of interest in his own right; or again, and perhaps more interestingly, belonged to someone peculiarly associated with its contents."[57] Association books can include presentation copies (those spontaneously presented by authors as gifts) and inscribed copies (those autographed or inscribed by their authors, sometimes accompanied by a personal message). Certainly, the inclusion of these terms in

[56] Starrett, Foreword.
[57] Carter and Barker, *ABC for Book Collectors*, 27.

ABC for Book Collectors signals their consequence to book collectors today. However, collectors had in fact shown little attention to association copies before the 1890s, when their value sharply increased. Luther S. Livingston, editor of *American Book Prices Current*, who first observed the trend in the series' 1901 volume, testified that, until very recently, the presence of an author's inscription "would add only a relatively small percentage to the value of any book above a good copy of the same book without such inscription. Now such a book is likely to be worth five or ten times as much as a similar copy without inscription."[58]

This remarkable increase was especially evident among association books affiliated with modern authors, and examples of the premium collectors placed on them pepper the pages of bookseller and auction catalogues. In 1893, a bound copy of *Bleak House* (Bradbury & Evans, 1853), presented by Dickens to his daughters, sold for £15—£3 more than the sale price, less than two years later, for a set of eight bound first editions of the author's works. (By 1907, the price of this presentation copy would rise dramatically, to £99 at auction.) D. G. Rossetti's *Ballads and Sonnets* (Ellis & White, 1881) with the author's autograph inscription sold for £10 in 1900 while similarly bound copies without his inscription went from $5 to $10 in the surrounding years. And the fact that a copy of Charles Tennyson's *Sonnets and Fugitive Pieces* (Bridges, 1830) had been owned by Thackeray, decorated with his illustrations, and inscribed with an original poem by him on the book's title page, likely explains its £300 auction sale price in 1902, when an ordinary copy had never before reached above $10 at auction. Even inscriptions from persons associated with authors could raise the

[58] *ABPC* 7:vi.

estimation of collectors: the Maxwell-Morgan copy of *Pauline*—which had increased in price at auction from $260 in 1895 to $1025 in 1903—was touted not only because it was Browning's earliest work but also because the copy was owned and inscribed by Browning's uncle, while an inscription in a copy of Ruskin's *Poems* (privately printed, 1850) by the author's father to the author's former wife, Effie Gray, certainly factored into its 1903 auction sale price of $600, almost double the prices for ordinary copies.[59]

Like the collecting of modern first editions in general, the growing interest in association copies at the century's end was an expression of literary fandom, one that allowed the collector a "still more intimate association with the author," as Harry Buxton Forman would have it.[60] That this intimacy was all the more strongly felt through inscribed copies, as collectors frequently insisted, allied the collecting of association copies with yet another collecting field booming at the century's end: manuscripts and autographs. Public interest in autographs had been established before this time—the activity was sufficiently popular by 1869 to yield self-identified "autographomaniacs"—and the trend continued to flourish throughout the century.[61] In 1896, the first year *American Book Prices Current* included a separate section for manuscript and autograph sales, these sales covered thirty-one pages, or roughly six percent of the entire volume; ten years

[59] *Bleak House*: *APB* 2:2 [Sotheby's, 12 Dec. 1893]; *BPC* 9:329 [Duchess of Montrose sale, Jun. 1895]; *BPC* :644 [Samuel sale, Jul. 1907]. (The copy was later owned by Harry B. Smith and featured in his *Sentimental Library*.) *Ballads and Sonnets*: *APB* 4:28 [Tebbs sale, June 1900]. *Sonnets and Fugitive Pieces*: Ibid., 315 [Hodgson, 22 Oct. 1902]. *Poems*: Ibid., 46 [Pierce sale, Mar. 1903]. In 1900, the exchange rate was $4.87 per £1.

[60] Forman, "Pleasures of a Bookman," 782.

[61] See Lauer, "Traces of the Real," for more on mid-century American autographomania and the popularity of Declaration signers' autographs. Lauer points out that autograph collecting was popular among the British patrician class before the eighteenth century, but it wasn't until the nineteenth century, when the activity gained popularity among the middle classes, that a "mania" was recognized.

later, the number had jumped to eighty-seven pages, constituting eleven percent.[62] In England and the US, periodicals and sellers catering specifically to autograph and manuscript collectors began appearing by the late 1880s, and turn-of-the-century collectors showcased facsimiles of their spoils in such titles as *Talks About Autographs*, *Meditations of an Autograph Collector*, and *Among My Autographs*. Political and military figures had long been popular subjects, but nineteenth-century collectors increasingly sought the handwriting of authors as well. Requests for autographs inundated literary celebrities while private collectors and booksellers alike closely followed the fates of authors' personal manuscript and correspondence collections. Upon Swinburne's death, for instance, his literary executor Theodore Watts-Dunton was immediately besieged with offers for the poet's papers, including one by a West End bookseller, who, knowing that Watts-Dunton did not plan to sell to a bookseller, masqueraded as an American private collector.[63] (As the following chapter discusses, arguably as dishonorable were the actions of Thomas J. Wise, whose harassing, haggling, and bribing eventually won him the papers.)[64]

The affiliation between modern firsts collecting and manuscript and autograph collecting adhered more strongly still in a practice undertaken by both

---

[62] *Book Prices Current* did not separate manuscript and autograph sales.
[63] See "Bookseller Fools Poet" [undated newspaper clipping], Rossetti mss. It is unclear who the wily bookseller was. In *Forty Years in My Bookshop*, Walter T. Spencer acknowledges that he purchased Swinburne manuscripts from Watts-Dunton following Swinburne's death. Wilfrid Partington, in *T. J. Wise in the Original Cloth*, notes that "a *London Bookseller* ******* ******* managed to get a foot in, and secured as many as one hundred and two [Swinburne] ms. pieces" before Wise could make his purchases (168). Randolph Hughes has pointed out that, with Spencer's middle initial included, his name matches the number of Partington's asterisks (*Lesbia Brandon* iv). We might take Partington's reluctance to name Spencer as evidence that Spencer was the devious purchaser, except that, by Spencer's account, Watts-Dunton knew Spencer and thus certainly would have recognized him.
[64] See Barker and Collins, *Sequel to* An Enquiry, 56.

collectors and booksellers: inserting autographs and fragments of manuscripts into books, either by tipping them in or by pasting them to a preliminary leaf. The emerging popularity of this activity at the century's end is borne out by a scan of the period's auction records, wherein, for every book designated as inscribed, there are seemingly two more with autographs or manuscripts inserted. Sometimes the book's content is plainly related to the introduced item—a copy of *Pacchiarotto*, for instance, into which was inserted the poem's first stanza in Browning's hand. Frequently, though, there is little discernible connection, as in the case of an *Oliver Twist* that included a two-line dinner invitation, scribbled by Dickens, to some unidentified friends. Collectors today often denounce the practice, and according to *ABC for Book Collectors*, to call these books association copies is a "thoroughly bogus" use of the term.[65] Some repositories now holding these books, including The Lilly Library, tend to remove inserted items to a separate manuscripts collection.[66] Yet collectors who favored these copies took great pleasure in seeing their first editions "enhanced" by manuscript material for the intimacy they evoked. This was the feeling held by journalist and avid autograph collector George R. Sims, who had delighted since childhood in the act of "embellish[ing] a good book with the letter of the man who gave it to the world." For Sims, handwritten lines were a "truer index to the man than all he wrote for print and re-read and corrected as he passed it for press."[67]

---

[65] Carter and Barker, *ABC for Book Collectors*, 27.
[66] At The Lilly Library, in instances where an inserted item is intimately connected to the printed book, the item remains in situ; otherwise, inserted manuscript materials are typically removed and placed in the manuscripts department.
[67] Sims, *Among My Autographs*, 1.

Seeking Authenticity in Modern First Editions

George R. Sims's longing for a "truer index" to his authors' lives emblematizes yet another motivating factor in the formation of the modern firsts trend: a significant aesthetic shift, documented by literary critics and historians, that placed a premium on authenticity and originality during what Walter Benjamin famously designated the "age of mechanical reproduction." These critics have shown that, as replications and imitations dominated the markets, a "culture of authenticity" arose in response around the turn of the century.[68] Sims, of course, was referring to the authenticity of the unique, handwritten document, which he explicitly privileged over the author's printed—and thus reproduced—word. Yet the craze for modern firsts developing in the 1890s was also symptomatic of a "growing appetite for 'the real thing'" at a time when mass-produced goods began to proliferate in Western culture—from furnishings and food to, significantly, books themselves.[69]

Indeed, the well-known combination of technological advances and rising literacy rates contributed to the exponential growth of book production and sales throughout the nineteenth century. The number of new titles published annually

[68] Miles Orvell's *The Real Thing* charts this movement from a nineteenth-century culture of imitation to an early-twentieth-culture of authenticity. Jackson Lears's insightful *Fables of Abundance* considers the tensions between authenticity and artifice shaping early American advertising. And Mary Balkun's *The American Counterfeit* documents a widespread anxiety about the authenticity of objects in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. To some extent, Orvell, Lears, and Balkun follow Walter Benjamin in seeing the advent of the mechanical reproduction of images as a nexus of these cultural concerns. Although these recent critics focus on American culture, the effects of the shift they describe are also apparent in turn-of-the-century England, most obviously in the burgeoning Arts and Crafts movement.

[69] Anesko, "Collected Editions," 188. Also citing Orvell, Anesko ties the industry of collected editions at the turn of the century to the developing culture of authenticity; he illustrates how the design and marketing of these editions attempted to conceal traces of their mass production.

in England quadrupled between 1837 and 1901, while the rise in new titles published in the US was even steeper, with a more than 1,200 percent increase in new titles during just the second half of the century.[70] Even beyond this deluge of new titles, however, reprints and new editions flooded the late-nineteenth-century book market. By the 1870s, works could be found in a variety of reprint formats, from standard cheap reprints in cloth to even cheaper yellowbacks and paperbacks. The major English publishing houses offered reprint series, with Routledge's Railway Library, Cassell's National Library, and Macmillan's Globe Library among the most popular. For those living or traveling on the Continent, Tauchnitz reprints abounded. And in the US during the 1870s and 1880s, the lack of international copyright law contributed to a swell of reprint titles from such series as Donnelley, Lloyd & Co.'s Lakeside Library; Frank Leslie's Home Library; and the Riverside Paper Series, published by Houghton Mifflin.[71] A few figures offer some index of the reprint's massive production scale in the US alone: by October 1877, 2,500,000 copies of reprints had been printed; and between 1877 and 1890, one popular series, George Munro's Seaside Library, had sold some 30,000,000 reprint volumes.[72]

---

[70] Sutherland, "The Victorian Novelists," 259; Tebbel, *History of Book Publishing* 2:23, appendix A. Using statistics printed by the *Publishers' Circular*, Sutherland documents that the number of new titles published in England rose from approximately 2,000 in 1837 to approximately 8,000 in 1900, while Tebbel uses *Publishers' Weekly* statistics to show that new titles published in the US rose from around 420 in 1853 to nearly 5500 in 1901. Both Sutherland and Tebbel acknowledge the unreliability of these sources, but these figures nevertheless give some idea of total production during the nineteenth century.

[71] The appearance of these series in the 1870s and 1880s followed on a US market for reprints of British works that began to flourish in the 1830s and often amounted to literary piracy. For more on this early market, see McGill, *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834-1853*, which examines the relationship between literary form and this rampant culture of unauthorized reprintings.

[72] Tebbel, *History of Book Publishing* 2:487-90.

Although literary classics were popularly reprinted, reprints were not confined to older works. Small presses reprinted modern authors' early works often under the aegis of author societies, who saw the publications fulfilling their scholarly mission. These reprints were issued in limited editions, but larger editions of modern authors' early works also appeared from major publishers. Further still, as early as the 1860s, large publishing houses were reissuing new titles in cheap reprints within less than a year of their original publications, and the lack of copyright protection until 1891 meant that cheap reprints of new titles appeared even more quickly in the US.[73] According to one contemporary account, by 1905, *Jane Eyre*, *Adam Bede*, and *Westward Ho!* each had some thirty different editions in Britain alone.[74] By 1907, John Buchan would claim that, due to the proliferation of reprints, "we find books selling as freely and widely as, say, soap or bootlaces."[75]

It was against this crowded backdrop of editions and reprints that collectors sought out first editions—or, to use a term they revealingly preferred, "original editions." At a time when reprints were suddenly everywhere one looked—from the railway station to the dry-goods store—the first edition became important for its semblance of authenticity and originality. Furthering the impression that the first edition was an original were analogies between first editions and original works of art. The first edition, one writer reasoned,

> is, as it were [the author's] original work, appearing for the first time, and, as the painter exhibits his pictures in the academy or art-

[73] See Eliot and Nash, "Mass-Markets: Literature," 422-25, and Eliot, "The Three-Decker Novel and Its First Cheap Reprint."
[74] Shaylor, "Reprints and Their Readers," 543.
[75] Buchan, qtd. in Waller, *Writers, Readers and Reputations*, 61.

> gallery, so the author displays his volumes for the public verdict, on the shelves of a bookshop. Should the public approve of the work, there will be a demand for reproductions of the picture, or reprints of the book, and these reprints will stand to the first edition in the same relations as reproductions to the original picture. That is the reason for collecting first editions.[76]

By aligning book reprints with artwork reproductions, arguments like these obscured the fact that first editions were inherently reproductions in and of themselves. Only by virtue of the later reprints could first editions assume their status as originals. Furthermore, the first edition's authenticity rested not only on the notion that a first edition was an original but also that it was more genuine than other editions—to the extent for instance, as some collectors contended, that the first edition's text was the "authentic text." In fact, the increasing availability of facsimile reprints—a small but developing segment of nineteenth-century reprint production—would seem to problematize arguments made by those who touted first editions for their textual authenticity. Given access to a facsimile reprint, that is, one would not necessarily require an actual first edition to consult its text. This logic guided William Roberts's prediction that the first edition of *Poems by Two Brothers* would become less desirable to collectors upon Macmillan's 1893 facsimile reprint, offered at 6*s* or $1.50.[77] However, the 1827 first edition's auction value rose sharply in the decade following the reprint: before 1893, the highest price paid for the book at auction was £17; ten years

[76] Clevely, "General Remarks on Collecting," 1900. A. S. W. Rosenbach similarly claimed that a "first edition is almost as much the original work of its author as the painting is of an artist" (*Books and Bidders*, 39).
[77] Roberts, "First Edition Mania," 350.

later, copies were regularly going for more than £25 and as high as £51. And large paper copies could be even more valuable: in June 1893, on the heels of Macmillan's reprint, the New York bookseller W. E. Benjamin offered a large paper copy of *Poems by Two Brothers* for $200.[78]

This preoccupation with authenticity was perhaps most apparent in a significant collecting taste developing in conjunction with the modern firsts craze: the preference for books appearing in their original condition. Prior to the last quarter of the nineteenth century, collectors typically had their books rebound: sometimes these bindings were a way of imposing uniformity on a collector's library; sometimes they were works of art in themselves, done in sumptuous leathers and intricately decorated. The practice of course had grown from necessity as books published before the nineteenth century were usually issued in only the most ephemeral of coverings, but even with the increasing appearance of books in publishers' boards and, by the 1830s, in uniform publishers' cloths, collectors continued to rebind their books, and rebound books dominated auction and bookseller inventories. As late as 1894, one commentator deemed the inclination for anything else "singular."[79] Yet in the nineteenth century's final years, the preference for original condition gradually formed: collectors began to seek books in the wrappers, boards, or cloth in which they were first issued. To bind together a work that had originally appeared in parts was especially looked down upon; one collecting guide of the period issued the succinct edict that "to bind is to spoil."[80] According to another guide, the

[78] See *APB* 4:310-11; Benjamin, *A List of First Editions*.
[79] Ellington, "Famous First Editions," 270.
[80] Slater, *Round and About*, 111.

unhappy collector who committed this mistake had at least, with any luck, bound in the original covers and publisher's advertisements, or "otherwise his case [was] hopeless."[81]

Certainly, fine bindings continued to attract the notice of collectors, and throughout the 1890s, volumes custom bound by noted firms such as Rivière and Sons and Zaehnsdorf could be more expensive than those offered in original condition. Additionally, not all observers of the growing preference for original condition approved of the trend, including, unsurprisingly, William Roberts, who cited the privileging of a "set of parts in their dingy wrappers" over a "tastefully bound volume" as evidence of the "idiotic extremes to which collectors [of modern first editions] would go."[82] Even the writer of Robert Browning's obituary took time amid his tribute to the poet's life to scoff at collectors' preference for the "unsightly form" in which Browning's *Bells and Pomegranates* (Moxon, 1841-46) originally appeared.[83] The sale that likely inspired this comment, however—the November 1889 Inglis sale, where a set of the work, each of its eight parts in its original wrappers, went for £8 15*s*—indicated the direction in which many collectors' tastes were headed. Descriptors such as "original cloth," "with label," "as issued," and "in parts" increasingly designated an item's superiority and consequently raised its financial value as the preference for original condition, which continues to guide collectors today, took shape around the turn of the century.

[81] Slater, *Book Collecting*, 17.
[82] Roberts, "First Edition Mania," 351, 350.
[83] "Death of Robert Browning," 9.

Surveying this period of book collecting history, John Carter maintained that the early predilection for original condition was "chiefly a matter of sentiment." Turn-of-the-century collectors of contemporary authors, in Carter's telling, "visualised the arrival of the first copies on the author's breakfast-table—a powerful influence in the creation of a taste for 'original condition.'"[84] Carter's argument, that early adherents to original condition were motivated by a personal interest in their favorite authors, is certainly correct. William Harris Arnold's communion with Keats—the experience that brought him "so close to the author himself"—was predicated on his possessing Keats books "in their original simple forms." Modern firsts collectors who happily envisioned authors' encounters with their own first editions no doubt imagined the books in the bindings in which they were issued. At the same time, to Carter's explanation for the preference for original condition must be added a recognition of a more widespread value placed on the authentic and the original at the turn of the century. Admittedly, to suggest that the privileging of original condition over the tradition of rebinding was motivated by a desire for authenticity presents a paradox: while rebindings were typically handcrafted, the publishers' bindings in which books originally appeared were increasingly uniform, machine-made creations that bore obvious traces of their status as reproductions. Yet regardless of their handcrafted nature, rebindings are ultimately replacements for the original exteriors, and set thus in contrast to original bindings, rebindings connote adulteration and artifice. The fineness of a rebound book, furthermore, has the potential to strengthen the association between rebindings and

[84] Carter, *Taste and Technique*, 29, 14.

artificiality. Indeed, although publishers' bindings signaled their own non-unique status, the very simplicity inherent to some original nineteenth-century bindings—plain wrappers and boards, plain or minimally decorated cloth—suggested a primitiveness that appealed to collectors' desires (then and now) for authenticity. In other words, it was not *in spite of* the fact that first editions in original condition were often what one collector called "ugly little books" but rather *because of this* that collectors were drawn to them.[85]

While concerns about authenticity played a motivating role in the modern firsts trend, it is also worth observing that the modern first's rise among collectors occurred when books published in England were not only more prevalent than ever before but also substantially cheaper. By 1894, the pricing structure for novels that had dominated the century—10*s* 6*d* per volume, or £1 11*s* 6*d* for the triple-decker—had been overthrown: first editions of novels were now common in one volume, issued at 6*s*. The cost for first edition volumes of poetry could range widely during the 1890s, but in general, their prices also dropped from between 5*s* and 6*s* to around 2*s* 6*d*. And reprints were far less expensive: paperbacks were common at sixpence, and by the century's close, even cheaper options appeared from such series as W. T. Stead's Penny Novelist and George Newnes's Penny Library of Famous Books. In the US, prices for first editions of novels fluctuated over the century but generally decreased, and cheap reprints sold for as little as five cents during the 1880s. Just then as books were becoming "so cheap … that seemingly the only step remaining was to give them away," as Richard Altick would have it, some collectors were willing to pay

[85] Vincent, "The Collector's Point of View," xii.

dramatically increased prices for books that had been published within their lifetimes.[86] At the same time, these enormous price increases suggested the great economic potential in collecting first editions of contemporary authors. And if the promise of authenticity was one motivating factor in collecting, then the collecting of modern first editions, as we will see, also raised questions about what it meant to be an authentic collector.

[86] Altick, *English Common Reader*, 315.

The True and the False:
Thomas James Wise, William Harris Arnold, and the Authenticity of Modern Firsts Collectors

At 3:00 PM on Friday, November 23, 1894, book collectors, dealers, and curious onlookers gathered for an auction at the firm of Bangs & Co., opposite Astor Place in Manhattan. In many ways, this scene was a familiar one at the firm, which advertised "almost daily auction sales of libraries, collections of books, autographs, coins, medals and other literary property." But if an afternoon auction was a typical event at Bangs, the collection was unlike others previously handled by the firm. Where major sales at Bangs in previous months had featured Americana, incunabula, and early English literature, up for auction that day in November was a library composed exclusively of nineteenth-century American authors, with nearly a third of the items published only in the previous twenty years. It was one of the collections gathered by the New York stockbroker and bibliophile Charles B. Foote, and another Foote collection, focused on British authors and including many modern titles, would be auctioned over the following three months. Foote took novel approaches to assembling his collection and particularly his collection of American first editions: he solicited the first editions he wanted by advertising in more than 100 American newspapers, he sent out some 40,000 postcards to small bookshops and other possible sellers around the country, and he tracked down acquaintances of the authors he collected—corresponding, for example, with Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's former Bowdoin College pupils in the hopes of securing their famous professor's early

textbooks. Through these innovative methods, combined with his fellow collectors' disregard for recent authors, many significant books in his collection were handed over to him at relatively low costs. For instance, Foote picked up his copy of *Fanshawe* (Marsh & Capen, 1828), Nathaniel Hawthorne's scarce first published work, in a small shop in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania for $50—a high price at the time, to be sure, but less than one-third of its sale value at his November 1894 auction, where it went for $155 (over $4,100 in today's dollars).[1] These impressive prices for both American and British modern first editions dominated Foote's sales, with his choice to sell off much of his collections coinciding with the early stirrings of the first edition mania.[2]

Seizing on the singularity of Foote's inclusion of recent authors and the high prices realized at the sales of both Foote collections, magazines and newspapers provided extensive coverage of the events. The American literary magazine *The Critic* deemed the second auction "one of the most interesting book-sales that have [*sic*] ever occurred in this country" and made the rare move of printing the selling prices of each item in the second sale in its February 9, 1895 issue, which it went so far as to call the "Foote Collection Number." The *New York Times*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, and the *Chicago Tribune* also covered the auctions. The *Times*, which ran two articles on the first sale alone,

[1] The *Critic* reported that Foote was believed to have paid $50 for his copy of *Fanshawe* ("First Editions of Americans [*sic*] Authors," 382). He had the book bound in levant morocco by William Matthews. In 1902, another copy of *Fanshawe*, this one in its original boards, sold at the Conely sale for the high price of $840. By 1921, Seymour De Ricci was estimating the value of the book in original boards at $500-600 (De Ricci, *Book Collector's Guide*, 282).

[2] Foote's library was sold in three parts, by Bangs & Co., on 23 Nov. 1894, 30-31 Jan. 1895; and 20 Feb. 1895. In addition to the *Catalogue of the Unique Collection Made by Charles B. Foote*, the sales were described in "First Editions of Americans [*sic*] Authors," *Critic*, 1 Dec. 1894; and "How Rare Books are Found," *Literary Digest*, 9 Mar. 1895. For more on the Foote sales see Cannon, *American Book Collectors*, 219, and Dickinson, *Dictionary of American Book Collectors*, 121.

appeared amused by the unprecedented values placed on modern books, calling the first sale's prices "charmingly exorbitant." "It was to book lovers the most encouraging of book sales," the *Times* added archly, "if they care at all for expression in money of appreciation for scarce books."[3]

The Foote sales also attracted the attention of the two book collectors at the center of this chapter, Thomas James Wise and William Harris Arnold. Wise, at the time a rising collector and bibliographer who wrote regularly for the *Bookman*, penned a notice in the magazine heralding the Foote sale as evidence that first editions by modern authors were increasing in demand and value—thereby indirectly bolstering the value of the modern first editions he was later discovered to have been forging.[4] Arnold, a businessman who had previously shown very little interest in collecting, credited the Foote sales with spurring his six-year first edition buying spree that culminated in two lucrative sales. Actually, it would be accurate to say that the "charmingly exorbitant" prices at these sales attracted the attention of Wise and Arnold. It would be further accurate to say that Wise and Arnold each exploited the new phenomenon of collecting modern firsts for their own financial and social gain.[5] The legacies of both men have thus retained an association with a phrase that Matthew Bruccoli

---

[3] "Scarce First Editions Appreciated." Additionally, the 2 Mar. 1895 number of the *Critic* recorded many of the third sale's selling prices.

[4] According to the notice, the Foote sale "proved conclusively the absurdity of the irresponsible remarks which have been made of late in certain quarters to the effect that the demand [for first editions by modern authors] was lessening and their value declining in consequence" ("News Notes," *Bookman*, Apr. 1895, 7). The note is unsigned, but Wise frequently covered news of modern first editions for the *Bookman*, and the "irresponsible remarks" were likely those of W. R. Roberts, whose denunciation of "The First Edition Mania" Wise had lambasted in an 1894 *Bookman* article. See this chapter's first section, on T. J. Wise, for more on Roberts's article.

[5] It is fitting to mention that Foote attracted heavy media attention again at the end of his life—not as a book collector but as the perpetrator of a stock speculation scheme that cost his firm $200,000 in 1900 (nearly $5.5 million in today's dollars). See, for instance, "Stock Brokers Fail for $2,000,000."

once applied to Arnold and one inherent in many discussions of Wise: "collecting for the wrong reasons."[6]

Wise and Arnold, however, who were friends besides being competitors for certain titles, also sought to make significant contributions to book collecting, bibliography, and literary scholarship. In fact, "however moments" like this one punctuate this chapter, which considers the complicated motivations behind these collectors and their equally complex legacies. Moreover, these "however moments" point to the particular evaluative questions that modern firsts invite. Intrinsic to the collecting of modern firsts—of presuming the value of a book before history has made that determination—are questions of authenticity that center on evaluating "rightness": not only whether the right books are being collected, but also whether they are being collected for the right reasons and with the right results.

In light of these questions, one of the items that Wise and Arnold competed for serves as the perfect title to each of their stories. Alfred Tennyson's "The True and the False," a scarce, 1859 private, pre-publication imprint of the first four poems in the *Idylls of the King* cycle, was one of Arnold's most prized finds, and Wise repeatedly and unsuccessfully tried to buy it from him. The true and the false of these collectors' intentions have long been under scrutiny. If "the true" is a pure love of books, Wise and Arnold appear by and large to have been motivated by "the false," in the form of personal gain. But their actions and legacies also suggest that these motives, questionable as they seemed, were a

[6] Bruccoli, "Hawthorne as a Collector's Item, 1885-1924," 393.

significant prerequisite to the emergence of modern firsts as a respectable collecting field.

Thomas James Wise, The Self-Made Collector

Born in 1859, in Gravesend, near London, Thomas James Wise's early history is—like many of his life's details—shrouded in some mystery. His claim that he descended from a noble Irish family called Wyse was untrue; likewise, no records substantiate his claim to have attended the City of London School. By age sixteen, Wise was in fact working as an office boy at Herman Rubeck & Co., dealers in essential oils, and by thirty, he was Rubeck's chief clerk and cashier. In part through Wise's successful business maneuverings, the firm prospered during World War I. By this time Wise had become a partner, and he retired from the essential-oils business around 1920. As Nicolas Barker and John Collins have summarized his life, "He started with nothing, retired to a prosperous middle age, and when he died in 1937 he left a fortune."[7]

This fortune was the £138,000 he left to his wife and brother. But worth nearly as much was Wise's beloved Ashley Library—some 7,000 volumes of the treasures of English literature—which he had cultivated over the course of his life.[8] Just as he worked his way up Rubeck's business, Wise began his ascent up the book collecting ladder at its bottom rungs. In fact, long before Barker and Collins would narrate Wise's climb to fortune, Wise himself promoted his

[7] Barker and Collins, *A Sequel to* An Enquiry, 45. John Collins provides the most complete picture of Wise's early history in chapter 5 of *The Two Forgers*.
[8] Wise's widow Frances sold it to the British Museum in 1937 for £66,000. Despite the fact that this heritage deal was not to be made public, news leaked, and the *Daily Express* announced in a headline that the "Exposed faker of books will have memorial at British Museum." See Collins, *The Two Forgers*, 272. In 1924, Wise estimated the value of his library at £120,000. Ibid., 221.

progress through the book collecting world as the rise of a self-made Smilesian hero, and he notably tied his success to collecting modern first editions. By his own account, he started the library in 1877 by purchasing first editions of P. B. Shelley's *The Cenci* (Ollier, 1819) and Thomas Moore's *The Epicurean* (Longman, 1827) together for twenty shillings. Seven years later, at age twenty-five, he made his first large purchase, the Pisa edition of Shelley's *Adonais* (1821), for which he paid the record price of forty-five pounds. "I was laughed at," Wise later recounted, "by [Harry Buxton] Forman, [Frederick] Furnivall, W. M. Rossetti, and others for giving as much as fifty pounds apiece for what they called Shelley 'impossibles.' But I backed my own judgement and was satisfied to wait." By the century's close, these books had become desirable collectors' items. And, as Wise did not hesitate to point out, his decision was a lucrative one, with contemporary and near-contemporary first editions climbing to unprecedented prices during the 1890s: "For these [Shelley 'impossibles'], " he crowed, "I could get five hundred pounds and more each today."[9] Who's laughing now? Wise's recollection seems to boast. Chided at first, according to his own account, by his superiors in the book-collecting world, he would eventually put together what was considered the finest private book collection in England—in part by accumulating the highlights of English literature at the time when the works of the immediate past and of the present were just beginning to be accepted into this canon. The Ashley Library's scope actually extended back through the Elizabethan period, and it was strong in the works of Shelley and other Romantic poets that had been the Library's nucleus. But as he grew his collection, he

[9] Partington, *Thomas J. Wise in the Original Cloth*, 33.

increasingly focused on later authors. His A. C. Swinburne holdings numbered some 400 items, and he devoted nearly 300 pages of his Ashley Library catalogue to describing them. His large Tennyson collection was generally considered the finest and most complete in the country. Other authors prominent in Wise's collection included Robert and Elizabeth Browning, D. G. Rossetti, William Morris, and Joseph Conrad.

In describing his rise up the collecting ranks from humble beginnings, Wise seemed to offer evidence that a collector's good judgment could outweigh his pedigree. Indeed, while Wise's business success left him prosperous in later life, he was still outranked in social status, wealth, and education by his collecting peers. The owner of a universally celebrated collection, Wise would seem an unsurprising nominee to the Roxburghe Club in 1927, then and still the oldest and most exclusive bibliophile club. Yet his attendance at Roxburghe functions undoubtedly accentuated his distinct outsider status. He would have stood out as unusual among his Roxburghe contemporaries in that he didn't hold a title (as the majority of members did, including Edward Stanley, the Earl of Derby; Alan Percy, the Duke of Northumberland; and Albert Spencer, Earl Spencer); a fortune (like John Pierpont Morgan, Jr. or the mining millionaire A. Chester Beatty); or a scholarly profession (like Sydney Cockerell, Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, or Charles Hagberg Wright, Secretary and Librarian of the London Library). For some, Wise's background was plainly at odds with the stature he gained through his collecting. Despite their seeming friendship, Edmund Gosse reportedly found

Wise "vulgar and uneducated"; others considered him "unrefined."[10] For still others, though, his differences from the Roxburghe set were markers of his success as a collector. The book collector and popular writer A. Edward Newton, for one, noted Wise's lack of university education while heralding him as the "most learned book collector we have today." Such accounts championed Wise's personae as a self-made man and collector.[11]

Yet Wise as a self-made book collector is not the narrative most associated with his legacy. Rather, when he is remembered today, it is as a collector of—shall we say—self-made books.[12] Over a twenty-year period beginning in the late 1880s, Wise, along with Harry Buxton Forman, produced forged pamphlets of some eighty titles by contemporary authors, including Swinburne, Tennyson, and John Ruskin. The forgers' success rested in part on their innovation: for the majority of their productions, they took a text from a genuine first edition and issued it as a separate, pre-dated pamphlet, which appeared then to be the first edition. A form of forgery previously unknown, it was also difficult to detect in that, unlike most forgeries, no originals existed with which they could be compared. The most notorious of these creative forgeries was Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "Sonnets from the Portuguese." First published in her 1850 *Poems*, the text was reproduced by Forman and Wise in a pamphlet appearing to have

---

[10] Pollard qtd. in MacDonald, "First Editions of T. J. Wise," 190; Bell, "T. J. Wise (1859-1937)."
[11] Newton, "What To Collect and Why," 123.
[12] Wise was first implicated as a forger in Carter and Pollard's *An Enquiry into the Nature of Certain Nineteenth Century Pamphlets* (1934). Since then, a number of studies have further explored the forgeries. Among these are Partington, *Forging Ahead: The True Story of the Upward Progress of Thomas James Wise, Prince of Book Collectors, Bibliographer Extraordinaire and Otherwise* (1939); Ratchford, ed., *Letters of Thomas J. Wise to John Henry Wrenn: A Further Inquiry into the Guilt of Certain Nineteenth-Century Forgers (1944);* Todd, ed., *Thomas J. Wise, Centenary Studies* (1959); and Collins, *The Two Forgers: A Biography of Harry Buxton Forman and Thomas James Wise* (1992).

been privately printed in Reading in 1847. Along with the pamphlet, the forgers also concocted its provenance: Wise claimed to have purchased a set of the pamphlets from a friend of Mary Russell Mitford. According to Wise's spurious tale, Mitford had been entrusted with printing the pamphlets by Elizabeth herself, who had wanted to present Robert her declarations of love in printed form. Promoted through this widely circulated romantic legend, copies of the Reading *Sonnets* were highly sought from their first appearance in 1893, and one eventually sold as high as $800 at auction (more than $9,200 in today's dollars).[13] This was also the pamphlet around which John Carter and Graham Pollard would build their most extensive case toward exposing the forgeries. In their 1934 *Enquiry into the Nature of Certain Nineteenth Century Pamphlets*, Carter and Pollard used bibliographic and forensic evidence to indict the Reading *Sonnets* and some forty other pamphlets as frauds and furthermore to implicate Wise as their creator. Later studies revealed Forman's role as Wise's accomplice, acting, as John Collins would have it, as the "editorial director" to Wise's "production manager and sales director."[14]

Wise never confessed to the forgeries before his death in 1937 and thus never offered any motivation for producing them. To be sure, financial gain played a role. Carter estimated Wise's earnings from the forgeries at about £500, double Wise's probable salary when he began producing the pamphlets.[15] This additional income would have been especially useful at the time to Wise, who was

[13] At the American Art Association (Library of the Late Edwin B. Holden), 28 Apr. 1920. Wise also authenticated the edition by describing it in *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century* (1895-96), the two-volume collection he edited with W. Robertson Nicoll.
[14] Collins, "Henry Buxton Forman (1842-1917)."
[15] Cited in MacDonald, "First Editions of T. J. Wise," 187.

moving out of his family residence and into his own home. But another likely and more significant motivation was the prestige he garnered from being the first to know about items his fellow collectors had appeared to overlook. As a younger collector and, further still, as one far less wealthy and less educated than many of his colleagues, Wise had much ground to gain within the small, insular collecting establishment. For all the pride Wise seems to have taken in his self-made success, his origins also evidently caused him some anxiety. His lies about his early life, for instance—that he was descended from nobility, that he had been educated at the esteemed City of London School—suggest a desire to impress his fellow collectors. Similarly, Wise's forgeries granted him a cultural acuity and authority within a community that revered these traits.

George Bernard Shaw, who knew Wise through the Shelley Society, offered a lighter-hearted take on Wise's motives when he speculated that the whole enterprise was one big harmless prank. "He did not forge first editions," according to Shaw, "he invented imaginary ones. His fictions hurt nobody."[16] Actually, Wise may have taken some pleasure in deceiving the bibliographical establishment, and it is worth returning in this context to his account of his origins as a book collector. He claimed to have been "laughed at" by established members of the book-collecting community for paying high prices for Shelley works. Like any of Wise's claims, the veracity of this one is questionable, but what is significant about this narrative is that Wise positions himself within it as one who outwits his superiors. That he chose to frame his origins in this way discloses Wise's enjoyment in having the last laugh, especially at the expense of

[16] Shaw, appendix to Partington, *T. J. Wise in the Original Cloth*, 319.

those who were better educated, wealthier, and of higher social standing. In this light, Wise's forgeries might be viewed as subverting not only the authenticity of the works he forged but also the discourses of authenticity surrounding the social atmosphere of collecting. The forgeries undermined a community whose glorifying of pedigrees and erudition saw its highest expression in institutions such as the Roxburghe Club by calling into question collectors' abilities to recognize both the authenticity of the works they were collecting and the authenticity of other collectors. Yet that Wise was indeed a forger—and that as such, one could argue, did not deserve the stature he held—also reinforces the existing social structure. Wise's forgeries, that is to say, simultaneously disrupted and confirmed the authenticity of the book collecting world. And the fact that Wise never admitted to the forgeries—that, when confronted by Carter and Pollard's account, he attempted to blame everything on Forman (who had died in 1917), retreated into near-isolation, and eventually resigned from the Roxburghe Club on the grounds of ill-health—further implies that he had no interest in claiming the title of master deceiver of the book collecting world. Rather, what he seems to have wanted was to be accepted and admired—to be authenticated—by this world.

Although those deceived by Wise may not have shared Shaw's view that "his fictions hurt nobody," the pamphlets indeed gave, in Shaw's words, "keen pleasure to collectors" when they began appearing in the late 1880s and early 1890s. The advent of the forgeries coincided with the growing enthusiasm in England and America for first editions of modern authors and the increase in new collectors who focused on modern firsts. This was no coincidence. The forgeries'

very success was predicated on this new trend and the interest it fostered in the earliest works of popular modern writers. Ten years earlier, when only a handful of collectors cared for modern authors, the forgeries would have attracted little notice. But the convergence during the 1890s of attention to modern authors and to first editions made the decade the first time in which Wise's particular brand of forgeries could flourish. Thus while Wise may never have explained what impelled him to undertake the forgeries, it is clear that he was too skilled a businessman not to recognize the opportunity presented by the emerging taste for modern firsts.

Wise also must have seen an opportunity both to promote the modern firsts trend and to authenticate his forgeries through the connections he was beginning to develop within the bibliophile community. Among these was the editor of the *Bookman*, W. Robertson Nicoll, who in 1893 gave Wise a regular column in the journal. Here, Wise most prominently stepped into what Carter and Pollard would call his position as the "spokesman for the modern school of collecting." As Wise's biographer John Collins explains, "Wise's new column was used to evangelize his own view of book collecting and especially to encourage collecting the moderns, in which field of course, he had a head start."[17] The column became a venue for legitimating the pamphlets and publicizing their financial value. In April 1894, for example, Wise responded to fellow collector William Roberts's attack on the first edition mania, which had appeared one month earlier in the *Fortnightly Review*. Notably, Wise's defense avoids any justification of the principles behind collecting modern firsts. It doesn't respond

[17] Collins, *The Two Forgers*, 102

to Roberts's claim that "many of the first (and last) editions of to-day are neither typographical monuments nor artistic successes"; it doesn't address Roberts's disgust with first editions by modern authors selling for high prices. Rather, Wise's defense takes the form of cataloguing these high prices. Wise, that is, refutes Roberts's criticisms of these "worthless tracts" on the basis not of their literary or bibliographic value (as Roberts based his judgment) but of their financial value. This circumvention of Roberts's argument also cleverly allows Wise to introduce a few of his own fabrications. Evidencing some not-so-worthless tracts, he cites his forgeries of Robert Browning's "Cleon," "The Statue and the Bust," and "Gold Hair" as "worth 10 or 12 guineas *each*."[18] One month later, Wise employed a similar tactic in reviewing J. H. Slater's *Early Editions: A Bibliographical Survey of the Works of Some Modern Authors*, the earliest published guide to collecting modern first editions. Where *The Times*'s review of *Early Editions* had treated the need for such a guide with suspicion, dismissively writing that Slater's work was full of "curious information of no great intrinsic moment," Wise championed *Early Editions* as a "much needed" book, thereby implying—if never actually explaining—the collecting trend's importance. But he further used the review as a venue to promote specific forgeries by faulting Slater for neglecting to mention Matthew Arnold's "Saint Brandan" and "Geist's Grave," Morris's "Sir Galahad" and "The Two Sides of the River," Ruskin's "The Scythian Guest" and "The Queen's Gardens," D. G. Rossetti's "Verses" and "Sister Helen," and Tennyson's "Lucretius." All were his own productions.[19]

[18] Roberts, "First Edition Mania," 347, 354; Wise, "First Edition Mania," 18 [italics original].
[19] "Books of the Week"; Wise, "*Early Editions*" [Review], 48-50.

Wise thus used his role as the spokesman for the modern school to promote the pamphlets he had forged. However, despite privileging price over principle in his justification for the first edition mania, Wise's exploitation of the trend was successful not least because he too was caught up in it. The Ashley Library may have included Wise's forged pamphlets among its highlights, but it was dominated by authentic first editions by such nineteenth-century notables as the Brownings, Tennyson, Swinburne, and D. G. Rossetti, as well as many more recent authors. A comparison of the catalogue's first seven volumes with its final four, published between 1926 and 1936 and devoted primarily to additions and omissions, shows Wise continuously adding to his modern holdings, particularly of living and recently deceased authors, including Shaw, Robert Bridges, Henry Arthur Jones, Siegfried Sassoon, and Maurice Baring. At the same time, then, that Wise was exploiting the modern firsts trend and building his legacy as a literary forger, he was also doing something that legacy has largely overshadowed: pioneering the field of modern firsts collecting through the development of his library. And it was in this role, as a collector of moderns, that many of Wise's contemporaries credited him as a leader. R. W. Chapman, in his introduction to volume 7 of the Ashley Library catalogue, lauded Wise for "disregarding the tradition of exclusiveness," in which collectors had focused solely on pre-Restoration and early-nineteenth-century authors, and instead "casting his reverential net wide over the centuries."[20] Chapman's praise echoed that of Augustine Birrell, who in the catalogue's second volume had commended Wise for "departing from the practice of his great predecessors" by collecting

[20] Chapman, introduction to Wise, *The Ashley Library* 7:x.

living authors.[21] These acclamations illustrate the authority that Wise had gained in the bibliophile community. Furthermore, they underscore Wise's significance in legitimating within this community the practice of collecting recent authors. Wise's position as a collecting authority and as a collector of first editions, both forged and genuine, authenticated the collecting of modern firsts. As Chapman and Birrell suggested, Wise's inclusion of modern authors was a deviation from tradition that other collectors would do well to admire. If a collector as respected as Wise was including modern authors in his library, they must be worthy enough to collect.

One way that Wise distinguished himself as a leading collector of modern authors and added considerably to his holdings was by purchasing rarities and association items directly from authors and their acquaintances. This method of acquisition he learned from Forman, who used it to gain precious Shelley and John Keats materials. For his part, Wise shrewdly adopted this strategy to build his impressive holdings in the Brontës, Conrad, the Rossettis, Swinburne, and others. In some cases, these purchases were reasonable and mutually beneficial. Such were Wise's dealings with Conrad, from whom he began purchasing manuscripts in 1919: the two exchanged amiable letters, and the author appreciated the supplementary income (although, as chapter 4 discusses, Conrad's relationship with Wise effectively ended the one he had with John Quinn, his earlier patron).[22] However, Wise's dealings appear more questionable in other cases, including his purchase of an enormous cache of Swinburne items

[21] Birrell, introduction to Wise, *The Ashley Library* 2:viii.
[22] On the relationship between Conrad, Quinn, and Wise (also discussed in chapter 4), see Reid, *The Man From New York*, 382-383, 412-415.

from the poet's longtime minder and literary executor Theodore Watts-Dunton following Swinburne's death in 1909. Wise had cultivated a relationship with Swinburne, corresponding with the author about his pamphlets, both authentic and forged. When Swinburne died, Wise, according to Barker and Collins, "bamboozled, nagged and bribed his way into Watts-Dunton's ménage" and purchased the bulk of Swinburne's manuscripts and books for around £3,000. That Wise later made a considerable profit from the materials—through sales, private printings, and publication rights—further clouds the affair.[23]

According to Wise himself, another way that he stood out in the collecting world was by avoiding the fashions—and particularly those followed by the new population of collectors. Although he publicly dismissed Roberts's "First Edition Mania" criticisms as invalid, his correspondence with the American collector (and recipient of many of his forgeries) John Wrenn reveals Wise agreeing that many modern authors were unworthy of the stature they had achieved with new collectors. In fact, just as Roberts had done, he cited Norman Gale and Andrew Lang as authors who had received undue attention. "The giants of Literature they leave alone," Wise wrote of new collectors to Wrenn. "And yet, when the great sales of first class libraries take place, it is just these giants of Literature that command the tall prices, and create records, and it is the books of the giants of

[23] Barker and Collins, *Sequel to* An Enquiry, 56. The cunning Wise showed in securing Swinburne's papers recalls that of the nameless narrator of Henry James's "The Aspern Papers" (1888), the biographer of a Romantic poet who engages in unscrupulous behavior to attain the poet's personal papers. But the profit Wise made from Swinburne's papers sets him apart from James's "publishing scoundrel," whose scheming was ostensibly in the name of knowledge. Wise's dealings with Ellen Nussey—the close friend and correspondent of Charlotte Brontë—were similarly suspect: according to Nussey, Wise led her to believe that Brontë's letters, which he purchased in 1895, eventually would be bequeathed to the South Kensington Museum; instead, Wise sold many of the letters piecemeal at great profit. See Smith, ed., *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë* 1:54-55.

Literature that always advance in price, and never 'slump'!" Similarly, when a reporter questioned him in 1931 about the decline in the book collecting market, Wise pointed to the "stunt" for modern firsts and called the decline a "slump … only in the trash."[24]

Nevertheless, for all these protestations, it is clear that Wise *did* follow fashions in his collecting. In the same letter to Wrenn criticizing those who collected Gale and Lang, he also cited Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling, and Robert Louis Stevenson as "fashionable" writers and contrasted them with the "giants of Literature." But a survey of his catalogues shows that Wise actually collected all three authors. His collecting of Kipling is especially noteworthy given his repeated denunciations of the author's works. Writing again to Wrenn, he called Kipling "much over-rated" and predicted a significant decline in the value of his works; he also condemned Kipling as an author to whom "fashion turned the attention of the foolish and the rash." Yet by 1927, the year in which Wise released the ninth volume of his Ashley Library catalog, he owned thirty-three Kipling items including *Schoolboy Lyrics* (1881), the going rate for which he had in 1899 declared "shocking."[25] Wise also appears less pioneering when one considers—as his first biographer Wilfrid Partington has pointed out—that the Ashley Library included almost no early literature of an author purchased upon publication. Wise, that is, did not attempt to speculate upon the potential of new and unknown writers. As Partington elegantly put it, "*A Pair of Blue Eyes* did not lure him at first; the original *Almayer's Folly* was like any other man's;

[24] Wise, *Letters of Thomas J. Wise to John Henry Wrenn*, 330-31 [17 Oct. 1903]; Allen, "A Wonderful Library," 987.
[25] Wise, *Letters*, 172 [26 Aug. 1899], 256-57 [14 Apr. 1902], 172 [26 Aug. 1899].

and certain lilting songs and amusing barrack-room tales … found no welcome in the Ashley Library—until they had become desirable things to be dearly bought." It is also worth noting that Wise's manuscript purchases from Conrad came long after the author's fame had been established and eight years later than John Quinn's initial patronage of Conrad.[26]

If Wise's pioneer status as a collector of moderns is complicated, it should come as no surprise that his role as a bibliographer is also difficult to characterize. The volume of his bibliographical output is undeniable. Most significant among this work is the monumental Ashley Library catalogue, which was published in eleven volumes between 1922 and 1936. Printed for private circulation, 250 copies of the catalogue were issued, fifty on handmade paper and 200 on antique paper. Each volume features a preface by a prominent member of the bibliographic community. Alongside the individual entries, the volumes include several facsimiles of manuscripts, illustrations, title pages, bindings, and other notable items; in many instances, reprinted manuscript materials appear, among them unpublished works and correspondence. Apart from the Ashley Library catalogue, Wise also published nine catalogues of his holdings, each devoted to a single author, including *A Swinburne Library* (1925) and *A Brontë Library* (1929). Furthermore, author-bibliographies also formed a significant portion of Wise's bibliographical work. These include Robert Browning (1897), Swinburne (1897, 1919-20), Tennyson (1908), S. T. Coleridge (1913), George Borrow (1914), William Wordsworth (1916), the Brontës (1917), Elizabeth Barrett

[26] Partington, *Thomas J. Wise in the Original Cloth*, 224. On Wise's early dealings with Conrad, see Reid, *The Man From New York*, 382-383.

Browning (1918), Walter Savage Landor (1919), Conrad (1920), Keats (1921), and Byron (1932-33).

This prodigious work contributed to Wise's rise in the early decades of the twentieth century as an authority on English bibliography and particularly modern bibliography. Attesting to his supremacy in 1925, A. Edward Newton announced that "among book-collectors of the present generation and for generations to come, the name of Thomas James Wise is secure: reference to Wise is appeal to the court of last resort."[27] (Of course, this authority also made him a frequent consultant regarding possible forgeries.) He joined the Bibliographical Society in 1907 and served as its president from 1922 to 1924. Arundell Esdaile, himself a distinguished bibliographer, was among the many to applaud Wise's work in the field: "Bibliography is the new tool which the last two generations have forged for the better understanding of books. It is not a small credit that Mr. Wise has played some part in forging the tool and exemplifying in one of our richest fields what use it can be put it."[28]

Ostensibly, Esdaile's choice of wording was innocent. And yet it altogether befits the corruption to Wise's bibliographical authority by his own forgeries. As others have noted, Wise undermined his own scholarship by including forgeries and invented provenances in his bibliographies. Furthermore, his fraudulent productions—and the propagation of them through his scholarship—subverted the bibliographic and literary historic record of the Victorian period. Just as Elizabeth Barrett Browning never printed a small, private edition of the sonnets

[27] Newton, introduction to Wise, *The Ashley Library* 6:x
[28] Esdaile, introduction to Wise, *The Ashley Library* 11:xxiii.

for her husband, Moxon did not publish Tennyson's *Morte D'Arthur* as a separate pamphlet in 1842 ahead of its appearance in *Poems* that year, nor did George Eliot issue "Brother and Sister" as a pamphlet under the name Marian Lewes. In some cases, the record runs the risk of remaining distorted: Wise's 1919-20 bibliography of Swinburne, for instance, which includes at least ten known forgeries, remains the standard bibliography for the author.[29]

Wise's problems as a bibliographer, however, did not derive solely from his competing role as a forger. Rather, as Simon Nowell-Smith, bibliographer and once-president of the Bibliographical Society, noted in a retrospective of Wise's career, many of his bibliographical faults were less nefarious. Simply put, he lacked the diligence, consistency, and attention to detail required of a talented bibliographer. He would, for instance, record watermarks in some books but not in others, or note that a final blank leaf had been used as a pastedown in one book but ignore the same occurrence in another. "He seems never fully to have grasped how books are made," Nowell-Smith contended of Wise. As a bibliographer, he often based his descriptions solely on a copy in his possession, rather than seeking out other copies to test for the variations that bibliographies commonly record. "What he saw he recorded," Nowell-Smith surmised, "but he

---

[29] The Swinburne Project, an electronic edition of Swinburne's poetry and prose hosted by Indiana University Libraries, relies on Wise's bibliography—with caution. As Project Editor and Director John Walsh notes on the site's Project Information page, "Wise's *Bibliography* … is an important and useful source of information on Swinburne's published works, though marred by the inclusion of spurious pamphlets forged by Wise himself."
Wise's scholarship was also hindered by his own commercial dealings. For instance, when he and his associate Clement Shorter purchased a collection of Brontë manuscripts from Charlotte's husband, they split up "The History of Angria"—a fantasy written by the Brontë children—and gave away, sold, or traded individual pages of the story; later, when Wise, along with J. A. Symington, edited the Shakespeare Head edition of the Brontës, they were unable to produce a complete text of the dismembered manuscript. See Collins, *The Two Forgers,* 229; Partington, *Thomas J. Wise*, 117.

did not always look, and frequently he missed the significance of what he saw."[30] These lapses together with his deceptions led Alan Bell, in his *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry on Wise, to conclude that "Wise was both a careless and dishonest bibliographer, and the errors in these works … mean that they are now of merely historic interest."[31]

That Wise was both careless and dishonest is undeniable. Yet to dismiss his bibliographies as defective is to risk flattening the complexities of Wise's motivations as well as the complexities of modern firsts collecting that Wise's bibliographic output illuminated. Wise was an authority on modern first editions in the most literal sense—in that he "authored" them himself. He did not, to return to Shaw's explanation, "forge first editions. He invented imaginary ones." In this light, Wise's reliance on his own copies for his bibliographic descriptions appears less a defect—less a misunderstanding of the difference between bibliography and catalogue—than a perfect expression of how Wise subverted the practice of collecting first editions by recasting himself as the sole point of origin.

Furthermore, to conclude, as the *ODNB* does, that Wise's bibliographies are "now of merely historic interest" obfuscates his significant bibliographic achievements. Observing that the bibliographical study of writers after Milton was largely unexplored, Wise was among the first to support the need for serious bibliographies of modern English authors, and he was certainly the most prolific respondent to this need. While he stressed the significance of studying the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, he also bemoaned the attempts to

[30] Nowell-Smith, "T. J. Wise as Bibliographer," 137. While Nowell-Smith identifies Wise's faults, his essay also defends Wise's achievements in bibliography and argues that harsher treatments of Wise's bibliographic techniques rely too much on hindsight.
[31] Bell, "Wise, Thomas James."

catalogue and classify contemporary literature as "slight," and the majority of his bibliographic output centered on redressing this lack in the bibliographic record.[32] Similarly, Wise had a hand in developing early standards for the bibliographical description of machine-age books. Just as modern authors had attracted little attention from bibliographers at the end of the nineteenth century, no serious bibliographical consideration had been given to books printed by machine, first appearing in the century's early decades. As part of an informal committee in the 1890s, Wise helped to formulate a set of bibliographical standards for describing modern books, including rules for describing title pages, collations, blank leaves, and publishers' advertisements. Although a specimen bibliography supposedly created by the committee has never been located, Nowell-Smith's examination of descriptive techniques followed by the committee members in their individual bibliographies offers clues to some of the standards they agreed upon, including transcribing all words and numerals on title pages; ignoring title-page cases, fonts, and printers' rules; ignoring inserted and even integral advertisements; collating by pages only; and assigning page numbers to unnumbered pages without the need to indicate that they were unnumbered in the original.[33] These rules appear not to have been set in stone: Wise actually changed his collational treatment around 1900, when he began providing collations by signatures for paginated books (in addition to his previously collated unpaginated books). Additionally, these standards hold little in common with those followed by descriptive bibliographers today. In fact, Wise ignored

[32] Wise, *Letters*, 228 [18 Sept. 1901].
[33] Nowell-Smith, "T. J. Wise as Bibliographer," 132.

modern standards—which were developed in the early twentieth century most prominently by A. W. Pollard, W. W. Greg, and R. B. McKerrow—possibly because he believed that the question of standards had already been determined by the informal committee of which he was a part.[34] Nonetheless, in spite of his inattention to the important developments in modern standards brought about by a new generation of academic bibliographers, Wise's early recognition of the need for special bibliographic attention to machine-age books was an important first step toward the development of modern bibliography.

Perhaps most significant, Wise made available for both collectors and scholars more resources about contemporary authors than anyone had before him. These resources took the form of his bibliographies and catalogues, which provided previously undocumented information not only about authors' books but also, in many cases, about their appearances in periodicals. Wise's contributions additionally took the form—found both within his catalogues and as separately published pamphlets—of his reprints of unpublished manuscript material including drafts and correspondence. His contemporaries recognized the scholarly value of this material. A reviewer of his *Swinburne Library*, for instance, applauded its inclusion of these reprints as "contributions to the biography of the poet and to our understanding of his attitude at certain crucial stages of his intellectual development [which] are in the aggregate of an importance not easily to be over-estimated."[35] Further still, in providing the foundation for later bibliographical resources, including the *Cambridge*

[34] For more on this theory, see Nowell-Smith, "T. J. Wise as Bibliographer," 134.
[35] Welby, "A Swinburne Library" [Review], 306.

Bibliography of English Literature, his work has had lasting consequence to collectors and scholars. And while in most cases more recent studies have eclipsed Wise's as the standard resources, his bibliographies are still common among the main reference collections in research libraries. The Lilly Library's reading room reference collection includes Wise's Brontë Family bibliography, while his Wordsworth bibliography sits on the reference shelves of the New York Public Library's Rose Main Reading Room.

And just down the hall from the Rose Reading Room, in the Berg Collection of English and American Literature, is a 1914 letter from Wise to Forman—part of the Berg's small collection of correspondence between Wise and various collectors and authors. In it, Wise tells Forman, "I love making Bibliographies and this is work which I know I can do well, and I hate to do anything unless I can do it well."[36] What is fascinating about this statement is its apparent irony: here is Wise, privately declaring his bibliographic fidelity to the one person who very well knows just how inaccurate these bibliographies are. Perhaps in this moment he chose not remember himself as the Wise who had created and promoted dozens of forgeries, chose not to remember that he was incapable of doing bibliography "well" because his scholarship was always marred by his own deceit. Perhaps in this moment he chose to remember himself as a pioneering collector and bibliographic innovator. Or perhaps he saw both selves as one in the same: a self-created authority in the field of modern firsts collecting.

William Harris Arnold: The Right and the Wrong of Book Collecting

[36] Wise to Forman, 14 Apr. 1914, Wise Collection of Papers.

In 1896, a West of England bookseller issued a catalog that included one of those underpriced, hidden gems that collectors dream of finding: Tennyson's "The True and the False," one of six copies of the trial book printed and the only one known to exist besides the copy held by the British Museum. Since the initial stirrings of the modern firsts trend, early and rare Tennyson had been among the material most sought after by collectors; by 1896, early Tennyson items had sold as high as £26 5*s* at auction.[37] The West of England bookseller, who priced "The True and the False" at 7*s* 6*d*, clearly did not recognize the treasure he had on his hands. But the trial book also went unnoticed by English collectors. It was William Harris Arnold, an American collector and a relatively new one at that, who managed to gain the prize.

In 1923, Thomas J. Wise recalled this story in his foreword to Arnold's collection of essays, *Ventures in Book Collecting*. The foreword also served as a memorial to Arnold, who had died shortly before the book's publication. By the time of his death, Arnold was a well-known collector of modern firsts, and he and Wise occasionally competed for items at auction. Actually, while Wise used the foreword to remember Arnold's "kindly and generous nature," citing in particular Arnold's allowing him to examine "The True and the False" for his Tennyson bibliography, he had long complained in private correspondence to the collector John Wrenn about the "impudence" of Arnold, who, as Wise would tell it to Wrenn, offered to sell the trial book to Wise at prohibitively high prices. Unfortunately, the private correspondence between Arnold and Wise no longer exists, so details of their relationship are difficult to ascertain. And, as we will

[37] For *Poems* (1830). See *Book-Prices Current* 11:300.

see, the fact that this correspondence was destroyed—burned by Wise himself and, upon Wise's request, by Arnold's widow following her husband's death—has heightened the mystery of their relationship and suspicions about Arnold's virtue as a book collector.

Although Arnold wrote copiously on the subjects of his collections and his own *Ventures in Book Collecting*, he left little record of his personal history in his publications. For other authors of book collecting memoirs, the increasingly popular genre served not only as a place to recall a book collecting life but also as a more general autobiography. Arnold's friend A. Edward Newton, for instance, peppered his chatty bestselling books on collecting with references to his boyhood in Philadelphia, his first crush, and his experience as a runaway from boarding school.[38] Yet Arnold was comparatively reticent about his own early history. One reason for this could be that Arnold came to collecting relatively late in life: where Newton and others located their earliest collecting efforts in childhood—typically to evidence the innateness of their bibliophilia—Arnold did not begin collecting until he was in his mid-thirties.

Still, a more unusual aspect of his background may have prevented him from dwelling on his early life in his writings. William Harris Arnold was born in Poughkeepsie, New York in 1854, the fifth of six children born to Susan Robinson Arnold and Levi McKeen Arnold and the first son to survive past childhood. Genealogical records together with references to the family in the *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle* offer some further clues to William's background. His great-

[38] On Newton's early life, see chapters 1 and 12 of *The Amenities of Book-Collecting and Kindred Affections* and the introduction and chapter 5 of *A Magnificent Farce and Other Diversions of a Book-Collector*.

grandparents settled in Poughkeepsie at the end of the eighteenth century. By the time of his birth, the Arnolds were an established business presence in the town, having controlled a prosperous lumberyard and a cotton factory, and William's father, Levi, had succeeded his own father as owner of the thriving Poughkeepsie Foundry. The Arnold family also had deep roots in the Society of Friends and formed part of the Hudson Valley's strong Quaker presence. Levi brought his family to Sabbath day services at the Hicksite Society of Friends meeting house, but he did not take an active role in the Society's matters, nor was he even remembered by a close friend for conversing in public on religious subjects.[39] And yet in the years surrounding William's birth, Levi claimed to receive messages, in the form of automatic writing, from Jesus Christ. These he published in a series of volumes, including *History of the Origin of All Things… Written by God's Holy Spirit through an Earthly Medium* (1852), where, among other curious offerings, he described antediluvian men with horns and tails and decreed that the New Jerusalem had already begun on Earth, in America, on July 4, 1776. Although Levi's writings were ridiculed by contemporary debunkers of spiritualism, they also gained a small and lasting following: by 1895, when William was advancing in his lifelong career as a bookseller and embarking on his ventures in book collecting, *History of the Origin of All Things* was on its fifth edition.[40] William did not publicly comment on his father's writings, and any

[39] The friend was B. F. Carpenter, who published an edition of Arnold's *History of the Origin of All Things* in 1893. Carpenter's memories of Arnold were incorporated into "L. M. Arnold: A Sketch," which precedes the text of the 1936 edition.

[40] And since 1895, *History of the Origin of All Things* has been published in four additional editions, most recently in 2000, by Christ's Age Press. As of May 2013, there is also a website dedicated to spreading the book's teachings. For the site's creators, the "wisdom, knowledge, and truth contained within [the] site is in itself powerful evidence of the truth and authenticity of

embarrassment they may have caused him is speculative. That he is buried in Poughkeepsie alongside his parents could indeed indicate that he did not wish to distance his legacy entirely from his father's.[41] And yet, at the same time, one can imagine that Arnold, who by the time of his memoirs had secured a prominent place within the elite world of book collecting, may have avoided advertising the details of his lineage lest he be associated with a father who believed himself Jesus's chosen amanuensis.

If Arnold was like Wise in his unconventional background—one a dealer in essential oils, the other the son of a reputed prophet, neither from the stations of class or scholarship traditionally associated with book collectors—then the two differed in how each distinguished his private and professional life. For where Wise let a fabricated private life spill over into his collecting life, Arnold divided his life history from his book collecting life history. Furthermore, Arnold saw a fundamental separation between his professional life as a bookseller and his personal life as a book collector, and indeed, in his case, bookselling and book collecting were two markedly different realms—not solely in the roles he played in each but in their very settings and what these settings came to represent to the book trade. Although he got his bookselling start, around age eighteen, at a small Poughkeepsie bookshop, by 1880 he had turned to the large-scale retail book business in which he would remain for the rest of his life. It was in that year that

---

these divinely inspired revelations." *A History* was derided upon its initial publication by W. R. Gordon's *A Three-Fold Test of Modern Spiritualism* (1856), J. W. Daniels's *Spiritualism Versus Christianity* (1856), and the March 1856 number of *The Ladies' Repository*; additionally, it was part of the vast library Harry Houdini accumulated during his famed quest to debunk spiritualism.

[41] According to the website Find a Grave, where he is memorial #51994863, Arnold is buried along with his parents, his wife, and his infant daughter in the Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery.

Arnold began working in the newly created book department of Wanamaker's department store in Philadelphia. John Wanamaker had pioneered the department store concept in the 1870s, and building on his store's colossal success, he expanded his inventory and added a book department, which Arnold would eventually manage. By 1884, books accounted for ten percent of the department store's massive revenue, and under Arnold's direction, Wanamaker's book department grew to be the largest retail book business in the US.[42] Arnold's success at Wanamaker's in turn secured his reputation in the bookselling world. As early as 1887 *Publishers' Weekly* was calling his business ability "unquestioned" and heralding him as a man "whose standing in the trade is acknowledged to be due solely to [his] energy and special talents."[43] The rest of his career can be traced through references to his activities in the pages of *Publishers' Weekly*. In 1887, he made a foray into the publishing arm of the book trade when he became the business manager for the publishers D. Lothrop & Co. of Boston. But just one year later he was back in the large retail book business, this time under the employ of the Syndicate Trading Company. Headquartered in Manhattan, the Syndicate Trading Company was a joint purchasing company comprising some of the largest dry goods stores around the country, and its size allowed the company to purchase goods from manufacturers—such as new titles from publishers—at discounted prices. New titles, however, were just a small

[42] Gibbons, *John Wanamaker* 1:202; and Miller, *Reluctant Capitalists: Bookselling and the Culture of Consumption*, 36. By 1892, Wanamaker's book department was selling more than one million volumes annually (Cushing, *Story of Our Post Office*, 959). Wanamaker's was following the lead of Macy's, which had opened a book department in 1870 and within the decade had become one of the largest book retailers in the country. Macy's was also notorious for its book price-cutting practices that led to high-profile lawsuits by publishers throughout the twentieth century. See Miller, "Saving Books from the Market."

[43] "D. Lothrop Company"; "Literary and Trade Notes."

aspect of the Syndicate Trading Company's book business: rather, the company specialized in supplying department stores with remaindered contemporary titles, and they also published their own cheap editions of books out of copyright, often showily bound in decorated imitation leather. Arnold spent the rest of his career as a book-buyer and later a manager for the Syndicate Trading Company. Additionally, until 1914, he was the buyer for a wholesale company associated with Syndicate Trading, H. B. Claflin Co., whose book business also specialized in supplying remaindered books and cheap reprints to department stores.

Plenty of successful book collectors held occupations unconnected to their bibliophilia. But what is notable about the companies for which Arnold worked is that they were often viewed precisely as a threat to those who cherished books. Discussion of this threat took up considerable space during the summer of 1899 in the pages of the *New York Times Saturday Review*, where an editorial and series of reader responses running under the headline "Collectors and Department Store Books" cataloged the evils of book departments. Among the gravest of these, as the *Review*'s columnist put it, was the book department's "lack of bookish atmosphere." According to the columnist, one was confronted with "books piled up like dry goods" on department store counters. The book lover, on entering the book department, would face the indignities of being "jostled by a crowd" and "waited on by clerks who regarded books as something to be sold." In other words, the democratizing sentiment guiding the creation of book departments—the belief that, as John Wanamaker asserted, "there is no reason that books should not be sold as handily as any other merchandise"—bothered those who disdained the departments' rise. For these individuals, books

were of a sacred nature, and they belonged in the rarefied setting of the bookshop, where any commercial associations were seemingly scrubbed away by the "harmonious surroundings" and the "pleasant relations" of staff who encouraged browsing.[44]

The flagrant commercialism of department stores was just one concern for those who worried over their rise. Additionally, there were qualms about the quality of books sold in department stores—of both their content and their form. The departments were criticized for prioritizing bestsellers over good literature, while the books they sold were faulted for their poor paper, blurred print, and sometimes even missing pages, and "dry goods books" came to serve as a derisive term for cheap, badly made books.[45] At the heart of these complaints lay the fear that book departments were putting bookshops out of business. In fact, since the rise of Wanamaker's book department in the late 1880s, correspondents in book trade journals had charted the decline of the bookshop alongside the progress of the book department and reported on failing bookshops that sold off their stock to the department stores. The accusation, made in an 1886 letter to *Publishers' Weekly*, that Wanamaker's and other department stores had "done much to ruin the retail book trade and injure the prospects of many hard-working book men" would echo throughout the book department's reign into the mid-twentieth

[44] "Collectors and Department Store Books." Responses to the editorial ran on 8 July, 15 July, 5 Aug., 8 Aug., and 15 Aug. 1899. Wanamaker's philosophy of bookselling is quoted in Tebbel, *History of Book Publishing in the United States* 2:112.
[45] See Whitaker, *Service and Style*, 208; and "Life of Books and Cheap Books." For more on the history of book departments, see Miller, *Reluctant Capitalists*, chapter 2; and Tebbel, *History of Book Publishing* 2:121-22.

century, and it rings familiar today in complaints over Amazon, Walmart, and other mass-market retailers.[46]

Not everyone condemned book departments. Some respondents to "Collectors and Department Store Books," for instance, defended the knowledge of book department staff while others touted the book department's better selection.[47] And one particular individual emphatically disputed the department store's blame in the fall of the bookshop: William Harris Arnold. Diagnosing the causes behind the failing health of bookshops in speeches delivered to the American Booksellers Association and then to a wider audience in an August 1919 *Atlantic Monthly* article, Arnold denied that department stores were responsible. While he admitted that book departments had drawn some business from bookshops, he attempted to acquit the department store by claiming that the bookshop's decline predated the department store's origin. Rather than department stores, Arnold faulted bookshops themselves, arguing that sellers lacked the "enterprise and initiative … to carry on [bookselling] in a spirit worthy of such a business," and in larger measure on publishers, whom he accused of saddling booksellers with unsaleable merchandise that could not be returned.[48] Arnold's article provoked wide discussion in book trade and literary journals, with responses that varied from support (by a *Publisher's Weekly* columnist) for the consignment solution Arnold proposed for curing the ailing bookshop, to a

---

[46] M.A.C., [Letter]. On the long history of tensions between independent booksellers and mass-market retailers, see Miller, *Reluctant Capitalists*.
[47] Additionally, "The Life of Books and Cheap Books" (*New York Times*, 16 Jan. 1897) argued that, as long as they could be read, cheaply made books (like those sold by department stores) still served their purpose to an audience who couldn't afford finer quality books. As the author put it, "You cut your cloth according to your measure."
[48] Arnold, "Welfare of the Bookstore," 195.

denial (by John R. Anderson, doyen of New York booksellers) that bookselling was really in so feeble a state as he claimed, to a rejection of Arnold's position on the culpability of department stores.[49] This last form of response was made by A. Edward Newton, who claimed that publishers too were victims of department stores through price-cutting. Publishers, Newton claimed, "will probably feel that Mr. Arnold, whom I last saw in his own library surrounded by his own priceless books, apparently free from problems of any kind, has suggested a remedy far worse than the disease from which they are suffering."[50]

What is striking about the image Newton invokes here of Arnold is that it encapsulates the tensions between Arnold's lives as a bookseller and as a book collector—or, more correctly, the ways in which he attempted to evade tensions between the two. His *Ventures in Book Collecting* only acknowledges his career as a bookseller in passing, and his *Atlantic Monthly* article on bookselling makes no mention of his book collecting, despite his having gained widespread notice for his collections. Instead, in the same way that Newton depicts Arnold locked away in his library, Arnold attempted to promote the idea that his books were isolated from his business. As Newton's comments illustrate, though, these attempts were not entirely successful. Newton's image of Arnold was a reminder not just that Arnold was a book collector but that he was a *wealthy* collector. Moreover, by setting the prosperous Arnold, whom Newton deemed "apparently free from problems," alongside the "suffering" publishers, Newton raises the

[49] "Welfare of the Bookstore" [Response]; "A More Optimistic View."
[50] Newton, *A Magnificent Farce*, 76.

notion that Arnold, and department stores generally, had been profiting at the expense of the real representatives of the book world.

This charge was far from direct, and Newton identified Arnold as a friend. But if Arnold's friends only hinted that he put business before books, others were more forthright with their allegations. In fact, accusations that he cared more for money than books were to plague Arnold's reputation as a collector long after his death. One of the most pointed of these posthumous attacks came from the bookdealer Charles P. Everitt, who sold Arnold some of the priceless books Newton envisioned him with, and who did not shy away in his own memoir from branding Arnold a speculator. "Mr. Arnold," Everitt claimed, "never paid me $100 for a book without first asking himself if he could get $200 for it ten years later, and very seldom without asking me if I couldn't let it go for $75. In fact, he seemed more interested in discounts than in books."[51] And implications of even more serious violations against the book world were made by Fannie Ratchford—the University of Texas librarian whose extensive investigations into the Wise forgeries during the 1930s revealed Harry Buxton Forman's role as Wise's accomplice—when she suggested that Arnold had become aware of, and profited from, Wise's forgeries. It was Ratchford who learned that Wise requested his correspondence with Arnold be burned upon Arnold's death, and she alleged that Arnold was "wont to confirm Wise's valuations" of his forgeries to other American collectors. Perhaps most damning, she noted that while Arnold had not sold his genuine Tennyson items in his 1901 sale and continued collecting Tennyson following that sale, the three Tennyson items he did sell were all

[51] Everitt, *Adventures of a Treasure Hunter*, 64-65.

Wisean forgeries.[52] Actually, Arnold's May 1901 sale included eight Wise pamphlets in all, and he made nearly $700 from these forgeries (around $20,000 in today's dollars).[53]

To some extent, even Arnold's explanation of his genesis as a collector supports the notion that he put money before books. By his own account in *Ventures in Book Collecting*, he was first drawn seriously to collecting by the sale of Charles Foote's library between November 1894 and February 1895. Arnold had moved by this time to Manhattan and was prospering as a buyer for the Syndicate Trading Company. Upon the recommendation of a friend, he joined the Grolier Club despite an evident lack of interest in the book arts (unlike Wise, who at this time was heading up bibliographic projects with the Browning and Shelley Societies). In fact, Arnold seemed to find the "potency of the punch" that he fondly recalled being "freely distributed" at Grolier Club events more stimulating than the examination of book collections during these meetings, which, by contrast, left him "apathetic."[54] But the sensation caused by the Foote sales, with the pervasive media coverage of the high prices paid for recent first editions, certainly aroused Arnold's attention, and it is easy to imagine what he might have gleaned from these reports: there was money to be made in modern firsts. In May 1895, on the heels of the Foote sale, he purchased the first of his first editions, Oliver Wendell Holmes's *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*

---

[52] See Ratchford, ed., *Letters of Thomas J. Wise to John Henry Wrenn, 34-38*.
[53] The forgeries were Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonnets* and *The Runaway Slave*; Robert Browning's *Cleon*, *The Statue and the Bust*, and *Gold Hair*; and Tennyson's *The Falcon*, *The Promise of May*, and *Lucretius*. For the cost and sale prices, see Arnold, *Record of Books and Letters*.
[54] Arnold, *Ventures in Book Collecting*, 1-2. Essays in *Ventures* had appeared previously *The Century*, including "The Making of a Book Collector," "A Book-Hunter's Garner," and "My Stevensons."

(Phillips, Sampson, 1858). Thus commenced his first edition buying spree. In fewer than six years, he collected over one thousand first editions and manuscripts, along with dozens of autographs and other items of bibliographical significance. Not all of Arnold's books were modern, and certainly one of his most prized items was a first edition, first issue of *Paradise Lost* (1667), bound in contemporary sheep with several leaves uncut. Nevertheless, modern first editions dominated Arnold's collection. Following Foote's lead, he made American firsts his central focus, restlessly hunting down in this short period more than seven hundred items by eight selected authors: William Cullen Bryant, Emerson, Hawthorne, Holmes, Longfellow, James Russell Lowell, Thoreau, and John Greenleaf Whittier. He also collected modern British authors, with strong holdings in the Brownings, Shelley, Keats, Stevenson, Tennyson, and the books of the Kelmscott Press. Among his many treasures were the complete holograph manuscript of Emerson's "Threnody" (1842), proof sheets of Robert Browning's *The Ring and the Book* (1868), a presentation copy of Keats's *Poems* (Ollier, 1817), and Longfellow's *Outre-Mer* (Hilliard, Gray, 1833-34) in parts. His voracious appetite for modern first editions and his success in obtaining the choicest volumes and the scarcest works quickly secured his status as a leading modern firsts collector. By 1901, he was, according to the *New York Times*, "well known as a bibliophile of fine taste and judgment.... Mr. Arnold's American library is the result of the work of a discriminating collector," the *Times* continued. "It is a most remarkable collection when one considers that it has been formed since the sale of the Foote library—with which it will, of course, be at once compared." Arnold's library was indeed compared with the famed Foote

library, typically in pointing out that Arnold's collection was more impressive than Foote's. Referencing the introduction to the 1895 Foote catalogue—which had boldly claimed that "it would be almost impossible for any one commencing at this late day to duplicate any of the rare volumes herein described"—the *Times* reminded its readers that "bibliographical predictions are not to be seriously regarded" as Arnold had "formed in the six years that have followed a much finer collection."[55] The primary reason Arnold's collection was considered finer was that, in keeping with the developing taste among collectors, he had sought books in their original condition. Whereas Foote had frequently rebound his books, Arnold, in his own words, "was always careful to obtain the books in the original covers, and those only when in good condition throughout."[56] Compared to Foote's collection, the *Times* concluded that the Arnold library was "more complete and in every way makes a better showing."[57]

And then, it all came to a halt. Retaining his Stevensons and his genuine Tennysons, Arnold placed the rest of his collection up for sale in auctions conducted by Bangs & Co. January 30 and 31 and May 7 and 8, 1901. He offered no explanation for his decision to part with a collection that he had so fervently assembled. The *New York Times* presumed that news of sale would "astonish many of Mr. Arnold's friends, as it was not thought he had any desire to part with his notable library of first editions."[58] Even recalling the sale twenty years later, Arnold remained reserved about his motivation for selling his collection,

[55] "Mr. Arnold's First Editions of American Authors." See also "American First Editions."
[56] Arnold, *Ventures*, 4.
[57] "Mr. Arnold's First Editions of American Authors."
[58] "First Part of the Arnold Sale."

explaining only that he had "personal reasons."[59] Whatever these may have been, his decision was a lucrative one: the entire collection, consisting of 1,121 items, realized $27,106.67, with Arnold making a total profit of $13,532.46 (or more than $393,000 in today's dollars). In light of the allegations that Arnold was more speculator than collector, it is tempting to read these profits as evidence that he saw collecting as a business venture. This assumption is further strengthened by the fact that following the sale, Arnold published two catalogues (one for each part of the sale) in which he took the unprecedented step of printing the cost he paid for each item alongside its selling price, tallying his total earnings at the bottom of each page. Meant to "justify the collector of average means in his pursuit and in the general wisdom of his investments," as the catalogue's introduction claimed, the display of these figures also suggests Arnold's fixation on the profitability of his collection.[60]

Given these actions, here is one way to understand Arnold's motivations to collect: an inveterate businessman, he seized on the profit potential in modern firsts and collected them as a business venture, caring not for the books themselves but only for their likelihood to rise in value. Or, in a more autobiographical vein, one could argue that Arnold, as the son of a Quaker spiritualist, sought refuge from his unconventional heritage among the cultural elite of the book collecting world while at the same time remaining relentlessly focused on money. To be sure, it was Arnold's focus on the financial value of his

[59] Arnold, *Ventures*, 4.
[60] Vincent, "Collector's Point of View," vii.

books that led Matthew Bruccoli, in a 1964 essay on early collectors of Hawthorne, to suggest that Arnold "collected for the wrong reasons."

Arnold certainly would have disagreed with this conclusion—because, at least if we go by his publications, he agreed with Bruccoli's premise that collecting books for profit was wrong. He addressed the question of motivations for collecting in "Why First Editions," a chapter in his small 1898 book on collecting, and here he champions what might be considered the "right reasons": he acknowledges the thrill of the hunt in seeking out scarce items; he dwells on the spiritual nature of collecting, a sort of communion the collector feels with the author through the possession of a first edition; he points to collecting's value to scholarship, characterizing the student as the beneficiary of the collector's activities. And actually, it is not difficult to identify these motivations in his post-1901 collecting. Following his lucrative sales, he began collecting again, narrowing his focus to association copies, manuscripts, and the works of Stevenson and Tennyson. His Tennyson collection was particularly impressive. In addition to "The True and the False," its other highlights included a rare, separate issue of Tennyson's 1829 Cambridge prize-poem "Timbuctoo" and an early manuscript of verses that would appear in *Maud*. During this second period of collecting, Arnold was less concerned with the condition of his items, the feature that had made his first collection so celebrated. Instead, moved by what he called the "sentimental appeal" of association copies, which he deemed the "most expressive and enduring of mementos," he made evidence of an

author's association with an item his priority.[61] Furthermore, Arnold's writings about his collection bear out his belief that the collection was valuable to scholarship—although he certainly did not think of himself as a literary or bibliographical scholar. Corresponding with Philip D. Sherman, an Oberlin professor, Arnold dispelled any notion that he was a "professional writer," telling Sherman, "I merely write between many duties for the pleasure of it."[62] He claimed in *Ventures in Book Collecting* to have made only one bibliographical discovery during his collecting career—evidence of two separate issues of the first edition of Tennyson's "A Welcome"—and his discussion of this find is less focused on bibliographical description and more on his personal joy in making this discovery.[63] This reference to himself is a rare feature in *Ventures*, however, and increasingly so in its later chapters. Like many books of this genre, *Ventures* is filled with literary anecdotes. But more than these are the book's long sections given over to reprinting entire letters or manuscripts from his collection. Of the forty-seven pages in the book's final chapter, "Letters of Notable Women," only two pages do not include transcriptions or facsimiles of letters or parts of letters. As a matter of fact, the book does not end in Arnold's words but in those of Martha Washington, whose letter to her sister Nancy—written on August 20, 1776, just one week before the Battle of Long Island—closes the chapter. The previous chapter, "My Stevensons," is similarly composed of transcriptions and facsimiles of Stevenson's writings with little commentary from Arnold, a detail he acknowledges in the chapter's closing:

---

[61] Arnold, *Ventures*, 27, 226.
[62] Arnold to Philip D. Sherman, 22 June 1920, Koopman Collection.
[63] Arnold pointed out that the first issue of "A Welcome" featured a solid diamond rule on its title page, while in the second issue, the diamond was hollow. See *Ventures*, 19-21.

> As the reader knows, this article, for the most part, is Stevenson's own writing; in fact there is so much by Stevenson and so little by William Harris Arnold that some may say, Why put your name to it at all? I don't want to go to that extreme; for I do desire recognition for bringing to light a considerable body of original Stevenson material, hitherto unpublished, which can now receive the attention it deserves.[64]

Arnold thus saw himself facilitating scholarship, and he saw this as a role significant enough to deserve acknowledgment, which he in fact received. The publisher of *The Letters of Washington Irving to Henry Brevoort* (1915) actually referred to Arnold as a "scholar" in an introduction thanking him for sharing his collection with the book's editor. Even the highbrow critics of *The Nation*, while grouping Arnold among "those whose business it is to herd in rarities," still praised *Ventures* as "of value on the score of the letters and inscriptions and bibliographical information which they bring to light." And Arnold's transcription in *Ventures* of an 1847 letter from D. G. Rossetti to Leigh Hunt—Rossetti's first letter to Hunt and important for its revelations about Rossetti's early ambitions—was used as the copy-text for William E. Fredeman's edition of the *Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti* and in turn is currently used by the online Rossetti Archive.[65] If, then, the profitability of Arnold's collecting choices suggests that he collected for the wrong reasons, his collections and his

---

[64] Arnold, *Ventures*, 298.

[65] Arnold's transcription was used as the copy-text because the original letter was believed to have been lost when the Clarendon edition of Rossetti's letters was published in 1965-67. However, after being out of view for nearly eighty years, the original manuscript was purchased by the Morgan Library & Museum in 2008.

promotion of these collections also supported literary and historical scholarship—that is, they also produced the right results.

The difficulty of assigning Arnold, like Wise, to the right or wrong side of collecting points to the certain limitations of simplistic evaluations. Setting aside value-based judgements of Wise and Arnold, it is undeniable that both collectors made bibliographical errors. In addition to including forgeries, Wise's bibliographies contained inaccuracies and inconsistencies. Likewise, Arnold was a faulty editor. He may have attempted to provide a service to scholars by transcribing Rossetti's 1847 letter to Hunt for instance, but Declan Kiley, Curator of Literary and Historical Manuscripts at the Morgan Library, which now holds the Rossetti letter, has pointed out that there are more than twenty textual variants between Rossetti's original manuscript and Arnold's published transcription.[66] Beyond these errors, it is also clear that both Wise and Arnold used book collecting—and specifically the collection of modern first editions—for personal gain, exploiting books to shore up their financial and social statuses.

To some extent, these inauspicious leaders would seem to have doomed modern first editions as a respectable collecting field. The actions of both collectors suggested that the most important aspect of modern firsts was their potential to rise in value—and their potential to profit their collectors. Even more problematic, Wise's forgeries could be seen as invalidating the very underpinnings of modern firsts collecting. By successfully deceiving collectors, the forgeries suggest the arbitrariness of privileging one edition over another. And yet modern firsts collecting thrives today both in spite but also because of

[66] Kiley, "Dante Gabriel Rossetti."

Wise and Arnold. Through their publications, each encouraged the serious study of books by modern authors. Further, the celebrity surrounding their collections promoted the collecting of modern first editions to a wider audience and suggested that one did not necessarily need to begin with a fortune to develop a valuable book collection—an important catalyst, as the following chapter discusses, in the surging popularity of modern firsts collecting in 1920s America.

And then there is the possibility of more surprising results. In the 1930s, a group of Caltech graduate students founded the Guggenheim Aeronautical Laboratory to design and conduct experiments with high-altitude sounding rockets. Initially, the project was destitute, and it wasn't until 1937, when another Caltech student made an unexpected contribution of $1,000, that the laboratory's work truly got underway. The contribution was surprising in part because a fellow graduate student was not a typical benefactor, but the project leaders accepted the money with alacrity. Eventually, this laboratory evolved into NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. And the student? He was Weld Arnold, the only son of William Harris Arnold, who in 1924, along with his mother, had sold his father's book collection for the enormous profit of $148,723, or more than $2,000,000 in today's dollars.[67]

---

[67] On Weld Arnold's involvement in the Guggenheim Aeronautical Laboratory, see Malina, "The Rocket Pioneers"; Pendle, *Strange Angel*, 107-30; and "Quiet Space Lab." Weld Arnold appears to have taken a different career path quite different from his father's. Upon Weld's death in 1962, he was serving as a member of the Board of Regents for the University of Nevada, where he had previously taught in the College of Engineering. Prior to that, he taught for the American Geographical Society, the Institute for Geographical Exploration, and the Royal Geographical Society. See U of Nevada Board of Regents Meeting Minutes, 6-7 Oct. 1962. While he may not have followed his father's aspirations in the book world, perhaps Weld did inherit some of his grandfather's attraction to the mystical: he was a member of the Reno Magic Circle, a club for magicians. See "Reno Magic Circle Sponsors Gay Party" [and accompanying photograph].
On the 1924 sale of Arnold's collection, see Anderson Galleries, *Catalogue of the William Harris Arnold Collection*; and Dickinson, *Dictionary of American Book Collectors*, 19.

"Why Should I Not Have First Editions?": The New Collector and the Promise of Modern Firsts

In 1904, the English bibliographer William Carew Hazlitt declared that the "astonishing demand for the first editions of our modern poets and novelists has, as was generally anticipated, subsided, and in some cases almost ceased." It was, Hazlitt continued, "extremely doubtful whether the taste will ever again assume the same unhealthy proportions." An open critic of the modern firsts trend, Hazlitt may have based his prophecy on hope more than reason: prices for modern first editions were still climbing at the time of his writing. As the first decade of the twentieth century progressed, though, the trend indeed began to slow, and the advent of the First World War brought a tempering of values in most collecting fields, including modern firsts. However, during the 1920s, reports of a craze for collecting modern first editions began to resurface, particularly in the United States. Signaling the trend's renewal were not only growing sales prices for modern firsts and the increased ranks of collectible modern authors, but also the increased ranks of collectors themselves: in 1930, one writer pointed out the "astonishing" rise in American collectors of modern firsts, who he estimated had doubled over the previous five years.[1] Reflected also in the growth of publications on the subject and the widespread media attention the trend attracted, the popularity of collecting modern firsts reached unmatched heights.

[1] Hazlitt, *The Book Collector*, 169; De Halsalle, *Romance of Modern First Editions*, xii.

Observing this popularity in 1925, the American general-interest magazine the *Living Age* speculated on what was drawing so many collectors to modern first editions:

> The collection of genuinely old books has always been a rather restricted sport—like polo and the Old Masters, yachting, period furniture, or polar exploration—and this for an identical reason: the men who can indulge such whims are few and far between. This is probably why the taste for first editions has of late years been extending beyond Caxton's handiwork and the quartos Shakespeare despised, to include "modern firsts."[2]

The article's somewhat muddled history of book collecting requires a brief review of past collecting trends: the collecting of "genuinely old books" had in fact existed as a "sport" only since the late eighteenth century, when a flourishing Romantic preoccupation with the past stimulated the collecting of antiquarian items, including certain old books. To be sure, though, many old books were recognized as valuable during this time and were pursued by an affluent elite. The growing competition for these books fostered the development of a golden age of book collecting in England in the early decades of the nineteenth century, a period marked by an "aristocratic atmosphere," with such collectors as the Duke of Roxburghe, Lord Spencer, and the Duke of Devonshire leading the field. This aristocratic atmosphere dissipated amid nineteenth-century England's changing economic and social climate, marked in part by falling land values. Yet the most

[2] "Modern Firsts," 573.

valuable books continued to be older books, and older books thereby maintained their association with the very wealthy.[3]

Furthermore, the declining English aristocracy inversely paralleled a rising American aristocracy—the millionaires of industry and banking—who also took up and soon dominated the sport of collecting old books. The English Settled Land Acts of 1882 and 1884, which gave estate owners the ability to sell entailed heirlooms, flooded auction houses with the contents of grand English libraries at a time when many American capitalists were prospering. Book collecting acquired a place among American markers of wealth and culture—playing polo, yachting, and the other activities mentioned by the *Living Age* article—and the collecting of old books was deemed the "Sport of Money Kings."[4] Most famous among these kings were Henry Huntington and J. P. Morgan, whose record-breaking book purchases regularly captured public notice. At the 1911 Robert Hoe sale, Huntington made international headlines as the owner of the world's most expensive book when he paid $50,000 for a Gutenberg Bible on vellum; Morgan purchased the Hoe sale's second highest-priced book, a 1485 Caxton *Morte d'Arthur*, for $42,800. Along with Huntington and Morgan, the period's other American millionaire-collectors, including Harry Elkins Widener and Alexander Smith Cochran, spent hundreds of thousands of dollars forming libraries of the most treasured antiquarian books.

The *Living Age*'s estimation, then, that the "men who can indulge in such whims are few and far between," was accurate. But what about its explanation

[3] Carter and Pollard, *An Enquiry*, 99.
[4] See, for instance, Jackson, "The Sport of Money Kings," and Pearson, "The Sport of Kings." On this period of book collecting in England and America, see chapters 3 and 5 of Basbanes, *A Gentle Madness*.

that "this is probably why" collectors have turned to modern firsts? The statement's qualifier betrays the doubtfulness of this simplistic explanation, and previous chapters have shown that motivations to collect are seldom simple. In fact, behind the explanation's vague referent—*this* is probably why—lie issues of wealth, culture, and social mobility that were significantly connected to the popularity of collecting modern firsts in 1920s America. This popularity marked a significant movement away from the aristocratic aura of an earlier collecting period and an extension of the sport beyond the money kings. The turn to modern firsts opened the door not only for new books—those beyond Caxton and Shakespeare, as the *Living Age* article described; it also opened the door for new collectors. As advocates of modern firsts collecting celebrated and as its critics complained, modern first editions had become a field for everyone.

Book Collecting for Small-Salaried Creatures

Unsurprisingly, the low cost of modern firsts made them an attractive area for collectors who could not afford more expensive books, and from their initial appearance in handbooks and other collecting literature, modern firsts were touted on this basis. J. H. Slater's 1891 *Round and About the Book Stalls*—which preceded his *Early Editions … of Some Popular Modern Authors* and was perhaps the earliest handbook to recommend collecting first editions of popular contemporaries—aimed its advice at the "collector of average means." Three and a half decades later, John Winterich's *Primer of Book Collecting* counseled audiences of "small means" to consider the "great opportunity" offered by the lower prices of contemporary authors. Of course, the contemporary authors had

changed during the thirty-five years separating this advice: while Slater recommended first or early editions of George Meredith, A. C. Swinburne, Alfred Tennyson, and other "living poets of the first rank," Winterich suggested the less expensive works of Arnold Bennett, John Drinkwater, and John Galsworthy. In each case, though, the recommendations were for works that could be obtained cheaply at their respective dates. Winterich, for instance, underscored the cheapness of his recommendations by claiming that several Bennett first editions were "dear at more than three dollars each" and that one could afford certain Drinkwater first editions simply "by forgoing a luncheon dessert for two days."[5] A Galsworthy collector, he advised, might begin modestly with a pamphlet costing as little as twenty-five cents and continue collecting other cheap Galsworthy works rather than pursuing his expensive items, including *The Man of Property* (Heinemann, 1906), which Winterich priced at $100 in 1926 (over $1,300 in today's dollars). Indeed, Galsworthy was among the modern authors most sought by collectors during the 1920s, and he was joined by J. M. Barrie, Joseph Conrad, Norman Douglas, Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling, George Moore, and George Bernard Shaw. As Winterich attempted to demonstrate, though, even while some works by these authors could be expensive, others were surely within the range of the average collector.

A pair of articles appearing in the *Bookman* made this connection between modern firsts and a collector's lack of wealth even more explicit. In "The Rich Collector and His Opportunities," the author surveyed the high prices paid by

[5] Slater, *Round and About the Book Stalls,* 37; Winterich, *Primer of Book Collecting*, 199-200, 197; Slater, 101; Winterich, 199, 200.

millionaire-collectors such as Huntington and Morgan, and he sympathized with "those forever shut out of competition for the glorious treasure of Early English literature, books of the sixteenth, seventeenth even eighteenth century, Caxtons, Shakespearean folios and quartos, Bacon, Milton, Bunyan, Gray, Herrick, Swift, or even the scarcities of early nineteenth century English and American books." In the companion piece, the author continued to lament the "Poor Collector and His Problems" (his problems being the rich collectors), but he also offered a solution: those who could not afford the fields that have become dominated by the wealthy, he advised, should instead seek out the "cheap and neglected" works of modern authors.[6]

Some commentators thus seemed to offer modern firsts as a compensatory field for those who could not afford to collect in more expensive ones. Modern firsts were, in the words of a *Publishers'* Weekly writer, a "substitution" for those who wanted to be book collectors but lacked the wealth to collect old books.[7] Yet others were eager to extol the modern firsts field based on its democratic nature, celebrating the idea that, unlike other areas of collecting, success in collecting modern firsts did not require the advantages of wealth. Invoking an "encouraging example which has the advantage of being true," Winterich demonstrated the benefits of modern firsts collecting:

> There is a man who holds a white-collar job, earning thereat rather less than the contemporary carpenter or mason. He is a person of taste and cultivation, an intelligent and discriminating, but non-

[6] King, "The Rich Collector and His Opportunities," 511; King, "The Poor Collector and His Problems," 620.
[7] "Newton on Collecting," 792.

> professional critic. For twenty years he has been buying books—first editions, but he has been buying them as new books, making his own forecast of the judgment which time would make of their authors. He has made few erroneous decisions—and so many accurate ones that I know of at least one dealer who would be glad to pay him a handsome sum for his collection—possibly not a sum that would make a Rothschild jealous, but one that would astonish those of the collector's associates who know him only as an unobtrusive small-salaried creature with a taste for reading.[8]

Although Winterich does not name this collector, a similar "encouraging example which has the advantage of being true" lay in the collecting achievements of Paul Lemperly, a Cleveland businessman. Between the 1890s and his death in 1939, Lemperly formed an impressive collection of modern firsts largely by purchasing the books upon publication. His collection was additionally renowned for its association value, which Lemperly established in an innovative and inexpensive way: after purchasing a newly published first edition, Lemperly would write to its author to request permission to send the book for inscription; upon receiving permission, he would send the author the book with postage for its return. (An even cheaper variation of his method involved sending a bookplate only, which, once signed and returned by the author, Lemperly would then paste into his book.) Through these strategies, he built a large and valuable library: the May 1939 sale of Lemperly's collection featured some 5,000 volumes, including association items from such authors as Conrad, Galsworthy, Hardy, and W. B.

[8] Winterich, *Primer of Book Collecting*, 195

Yeats, and the sale realized approximately $21,000. As with Winterich and his example, contemporaries contextualized Lemperly's achievements in terms of his lack of wealth. The well-known collector and writer on collecting A. Edward Newton identified him as "comparatively a poor man." He praised Lemperly for his foresight, evidencing his early recognition of the merit in works by new authors, such as A. E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad* (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1896), which Lemperly purchased soon after its publication for $1.75 and had signed by Housman. In 1925, the Chicago bookseller Walter M. Hill was offering a copy of *A Shropshire Lad* for $250; by 1927, when Newton was writing, a copy had sold at auction for $320.[9] "This," Newton wrote of Lemperly's method, "is what I call playing the game with skill: it is akin to landing a very large trout with a very small fly."[10]

This gleeful championing of the "small-salaried creature" in a world typically dominated by the wealthy illustrates a significant appeal of modern firsts and one, moreover, that aligns this collecting field with the ethos of the American dream. Here, as its promoters contended, was a field in which success could be acquired regardless of financial background. The established treasures of book collecting belonged to the domain of men whose affluence frequently derived not only from their own impressive business dealings but from family inheritance as well. Without these forms of wealth, the average collector certainly could not afford the prized titles of the book collecting world. Yet, as

---

[9] Hill, Apr. 1925; *ABPC* 33 [Whitall sale, Feb. 1927]. *A Shropshire Lad* was priced upon publication at 2*s* 6*d*; its value did not rise substantially until the 1920s.
[10] Newton, *This Book Collecting Game*, 254 (These quotes are from the chapter "What To Collect—And Why," which originally appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*). On Lemperly, see Keller, "Paul Lemperly."

these book collecting guides repeatedly told readers, in modern firsts lay a field of opportunity for the average collector. With modern firsts, one need not be a millionaire to develop a potentially remarkable—and valuable—collection of books.

Small Collectors, Great Profits

Indeed, the potential for increasing value underlay many of the recommendations for collecting modern firsts and facilitated the field's popularity. Handbooks and other collecting literature teemed with then-and-now comparisons and predictions. J. H. Slater, after mentioning the £1 Tennyson first editions, predicted that they would be worth "five or six times as much … in the near future." John Winterich, for his part, counted on the increasing popularity of modern firsts collecting to drive up prices on books that were at present readily available and thus inexpensive: "once the number of collectors begins to approach the supply of available books," he contended, "a great appreciation in the value of the items will follow."[11] The examples of Winterich's unnamed collector and Paul Lemperly similarly illustrated the great profit to be gained by collecting modern firsts before their values rose. Still further, a persuasive endorsement for the potential profit in modern firsts could be found in the catalogue William Harris Arnold published after his May 1901 sale.[12] As mentioned in chapter 2, Arnold recorded the price he paid and the selling price for each item in the sale; he also included a running tally of his profit at the

[11] Slater, *Round and About the Bookstalls,* 53; Winterich, *Primer on Book Collecting*, 181.
[12] This catalogue is titled *A Record of Books and Letters, Collected by William Harris Arnold* and is to be distinguished from *Books and Letters, Collected by William Harris Arnold*, which was published prior to the May 1901 sale.

bottom of each page and further distinguished these figures by printing the price paid in red ink. Although he lost money on some items, several of his books saw steep price increases over a short amount of time, from such lower-priced items as Austin Dobson's *Paladin of Philanthropy* (Chatto & Windus, 1899)—for which Arnold paid $1.80 in 1899 and which he sold for $4.50 just two years later—to more expensive books, including a presentation copy of Robert Browning's *Dramatis Personae* (Chapman & Hall, 1864), which sold for more than twelve times Arnold's 1896 purchase price of $12.83. In all, the sale's 411 lots saw a profit of more than $9,600. According to the catalogue's introduction, the inclusion of these figures was intended to "justify the collector of average means in his pursuit and in the general wisdom of his investments."[13] Certainly, by promoting the profit he had made, Arnold's catalogue advertised the average collector's prospective financial gain in collecting modern firsts.

Book-collecting literature, including handbooks and sale catalogues, thus highlighted the financial advantages of collecting modern firsts. Periodicals aimed at the bibliophile, which had multiplied in the last decade of the nineteenth century, grew again in the 1920s and early 1930s. *Book Collector's Quarterly*, *Bookseller and Collector*, *First Edition and Book Collector*, *Biblio: A Journal for Book Lovers,* and other collecting magazines began (and, in many cases, ended) during this time, and these also reported on the collecting of modern authors.[14] Likewise, established book-industry and library journals

[13] Vincent, introduction, *Record of Books and Letters*, vii. The 411 lots in Arnold's May 7-8, 1900 sale cost $10,066.05 and sold for $19,743.50.
[14] According to WorldCat records, *Book Collector's Quarterly* (US) ran from Oct. 1924-Jan. 1926. (A UK *Book-Collector's Quarterly* ran from Dec. 1930 to June 1935). *Bookseller and Collector*, also known as *Bookseller and Print Dealers' Weekly*, began in Sept. 1926; its end date is

increasingly covered the trend. *Publishers' Weekly*, for instance, ran a ten-part series during 1924 on collecting first editions; by the late twenties, the magazine was offering a regular section on collecting modern firsts that included articles on relevant sales, recently published first editions, and checklists of modern authors.

Yet a potential collector did not need to seek out these specialty publications to learn about collecting modern firsts. Given their focus, it is unsurprising that literary magazines, including the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Scribner's Magazine* in the US and the *Athenaeum* and the *Fortnightly Review* in England, also reported on the subject. But the audience of those learning about the modern firsts trend was even broader still as articles on collecting contemporary authors filled the pages of general interest magazines, particularly in 1920s America. The *Literary Digest*, which was aimed at a news-conscious general public and had a circulation of 1.5 million in 1927, ran such suggestive headlines as "Guessing the Durable Books" and "Book Collecting for Profit." Articles in other mass-market magazines, including the *Living Age* and *World's Work*—the latter centered on business topics and "intended to convey the cheerful spirit of men who do things"—covered the trend and advertised the profitable "Business of Books."[15]

Perhaps the clearest index to the popularity of collecting modern firsts, however, is the attention the *Saturday Evening Post* devoted to the subject

---

uncertain, though the last known issue, held by the University of Michigan Library, dates from 1931. *First Edition and Book Collector* appears not to have made it beyond 1924, while *Biblio: A Journal for Booklovers* ran from July 1921 to Apr. 1927. Additional book collecting periodicals that came and went during the period include *The Bookman's Journal and Print Collector* (Oct. 1919-1931) and *The Book Lover*, which began a new series July 1924 and ended Apr. 1928.

[15] Qtd. in Nourie and Nourie, eds., *American Mass-Market Magazines*, 562; "Business of Books" was the title of an A. E. Newton article in *World's Work*.

during the 1920s. With a self-proclaimed readership of "the average American," the *Post* was the most widely circulated weekly in the US throughout the twenties and could boast a readership of 2.8 million by 1929. This growth was influenced by the editorial leadership of G. H. Lorimer, who sought to provide his audience with "informational articles about getting ahead through hard work, new ideas, and even modest investments."[16] In line with this directive, the *Post* carried frequent articles on the merits of collecting, and especially book collecting. In just over two years, between 1925 and 1927, more than a dozen feature-length articles about book collecting appeared in the magazine. Flanked by advertisements for Bull Durham tobacco and Snap-On tire chains, these articles exposed "the average American" to the world of book auctions, bibliographic terminology, and collecting modern first editions. In fact, in 1927, when both literary and general interest magazines were crowded with ads for books—from new novels, to Book-of-the-Month Club subscriptions, to encyclopedias—the only books advertised in the *Post* were coupon and promotional booklets. Yet in this year, the magazine's readers could learn about book collecting through a series of eight articles by A. S. W. Rosenbach, the famed Philadelphia book dealer whose auction-room exploits throughout the twenties attracted much publicity. Rosenbach didn't directly recommend collecting modern firsts in these articles (calling Americana the "collector's best bet" instead). He did offer suggestive remarks, though, about the value of modern firsts: for instance, attempting to dispel "the great and popular fallacy" that "age alone should be thought to give value to most collectible objects," he pointed out that a "first edition of A. A.

[16] Cohn, *Creating America*, 31.

Milne's *When We Were Very Young*, printed two years ago, is already more precious than some old tome, such as a sermon of the 1490s by the famous teacher, Johannes Gerson."[17]

If Rosenbach only alluded to the economic potential in collecting modern firsts, then Vincent Starrett made these benefits more obvious to *Post* readers. A bibliographer, collector, and Sherlock Holmes enthusiast, Starrett wrote frequently on bibliographical subjects for a popular audience, and his *Post* articles aimed at educating the bibliographically ignorant. His "ABC of First Editions," for instance, is a primer aimed at the true novice: Starrett explains to its readers what first editions are, how they can be identified, and why they are valued. Moreover, he concentrates his discussion on modern first editions, deeming them the "most immediate subjects of interest to the neophyte [as] it is the modern books that are most likely to turn up in his path." Modern firsts are also the focus of an earlier *Post* article by Starrett, "The Diamond in the Dust Heap"; here, he makes apparent that in addition to instructing readers in bibliographic basics, he is also attempting to impart the joys of book collecting. Describing his own book collecting adventures, he illustrates that the fun lies partly in the "excitements of the chase." Yet what the article undeniably emphasizes to *Post* readers is the joy of possible financial profit. Hence Starrett's observation, early in the article, that "there is really much happiness to be found under the hospitable awnings of the secondhand bookshops of the world"

[17] Rosenbach, "Talking of Old Books," *Books and Bidders*, 27, 28. This article originally appeared in the *Post*, as did "The Collector's Best Bet." *Books and Bidders* reprints the eight *Post* articles plus one essay from the *Atlantic*.

does not stand on its own. Instead, he continues the sentence: "and—since in this day it would often seem that financial success alone justifies one's effort in whatever line—no little profit."

Seductively subtitled "Treasures Buried in Secondhand Bookstores," the article dwells on the financial rewards of scouring shops for potentially valuable first editions—and not only books already considered valuable but also those whose value has yet to be recognized. As Starrett explains:

> In time one realizes that the golden age of book collecting is here and now, and that it behooves one to take advantage of it. From this point dates one's emancipation, and Poe and Thackeray, FitzGerald, Keats and Dickens are left to the millionaires. In their stead, one rears the images … of Cabell and Mencken, Robinson, Hergesheimer and Miss Millay; of Frank Norris and Stephen Crane, and Bierce and Masters and Machen and Morley; of Conrad and Hardy and Dreiser. It is a good list, and in the matter of antiquarian values, the sober fact is that the rarer editions of these writers bring higher prices in the market than similar works ever brought before. The brochures and octavos of these gentlemen and Miss Millay are the diamonds in the dust heaps of tomorrow. They are the *Tamerlanes* and *Omars* of tomorrow.

Although Starrett does not make specific predictions about the potential worth of the modern authors he lists, his reference to *Tamerlane* would have allowed *Post* readers to gauge that worth themselves: the previous year, the magazine carried

an article—again by Starrett—advertising the most recent recorded price paid for a copy of *Tamerlane* as more than $11,000.[18]

That Conrad and Hardy were the authors on Starrett's list most sought by collectors points to the continued dominance of English books in the rare book market during the 1920s. As Starrett suggested, however, collectors who hoped to see their purchases appreciate over the following years might turn their attention to modern American authors, a point that would be increasingly repeated over the decade. In fact, many works by the American authors Starrett listed may have pushed the financial limitations of the average collector, frequently selling for more than $20 at auction in the early 1920s (approximately $250 in today's dollars).[19] First editions of Edna St. Vincent Millay's first book, *Renascence and Other Poems* (Mitchell Kennerley, 1917) sold for no less than $32 at auction in the early 1920s, and signed copies of a limited edition printed on Japan vellum went as high as $125 (around $1,500 in today's dollars). But Starrett's message was that the potential worth of these modern authors' volumes had not yet been fully recognized, and his tales of sifting through the shelves of second-hand bookshops furthermore suggested that already valuable books could very well be sitting in a dust heap somewhere, waiting for the knowing eye of an enterprising collector or, even, a careful *Post* reader.

---

[18] Starrett, "ABC of First Editions," 82; "Diamond in the Dust Heap," 54. As a result of Starrett's "Have You a *Tamerlane* in Your Attic"—which ended with the provocative "It is worth ten thousand dollars! Perhaps there is one in your attic!"—at least five copies of Poe's early pamphlet surfaced. In December 2009, one of these copies sold at Christie's for $662,500, setting a new record for a work of American literature.

[19] Among these were Cabell's *Eagle's Shadow* (Doubleday, Page, 1904) and *Jurgen* (McBride, 1919) and Robinson's *Children of the Night* (Badger, 1897) and *Captain Craig* (Houghton Mifflin, 1902).

In his *Post* articles, Starrett romanticizes book collecting with alluring examples of financial profit. At the same time, he makes clear to readers that finding these treasures requires effort and perseverance, prescribing, for instance, that collectors undergo "ten to fifteen years of diligent catalogue reading" to become familiar with the subject. For those who find this probationary period too long, Starrett dismisses them to the collecting of postage stamps or baking-powder tins. Yet for individuals willing to put in the work, Starrett contends, treasures could await. In fact, he claims a particular virtue—at the same time financial and moral—in being a collector who undertakes the necessary mental and physical labor to develop a good collection. To this method of collecting, he contrasts the "millionaire's way": the millionaire "tells his agent what interests him, or his agent tells him what ought to interest him, and the millionaire gives a blanket order that is passed along to the rare-book dealer. The dealer advertises widely, England is ransacked, and in time the desired items are procured and turned over to the millionaire for a pretty penny." The "small collector's way," on the other hand, requires both physical effort—as he must dig through the shelves of dusty shops—and knowledge—as he must recognize literary value ahead of others and spot errors made by dealers. Contrasted with the apparent indolence and even indifference of the millionaire, the small collector's way is thus "by all odds the happiest way"—not in spite of being the "more difficult way" but rather because of it. And these difficulties could be even sweeter, Starrett doesn't hesitate to note, because the small collector's way could also be a lucrative one: he imagines a small collector eventually putting together a "very good and representative collection of choice works that have cost him

probably less than a tenth of what they are actually worth. If he cares to sell them," Starrett ventures, "he may reap a handsome profit on his investment."[20]

The message behind Starrett's narrative of the small collector—that hard work could lead to financial success—would have been familiar to *Post* readers, who frequently encountered articles and short stories about the economic benefits of patient, persevering work. Moreover, this message is central to the traditional American ethos, and here again modern firsts are depicted as the field in which opportunity could be realized: for the collector willing to work, Starrett's narrative intimated, the financial payoffs of modern firsts could be significant. Furthermore, in the differences he draws between the small collector and the millionaire, Starrett plays upon a particular moral component of this American ideology by pitting the determination and integrity of hard labor against the indulgence and inauthenticity of established wealth. Closing his narrative, he takes this theme one step further: Starrett imagines the small collector selling his books for a great profit, or "if he does not care to sell he may—and does—sit back and boast of the items in his collection that So-and-So, the wealthy collector, with all his money could not buy." Thus in the end, the small collector's lack of concern for financial profit is rewarded not only by his joy in his books but also, and more evidently, by his moral victory over the undue privileges of wealth.

[20] Starrett, "Diamond in the Dust Heap," 54, 70.

Collecting Culture

The ultimate prize that Starrett imagines—the small book collector attaining what can't be bought—reveals another significant promise of modern firsts: beyond collecting's financial benefits, its educational and social merits were also extolled by those writing to a popular audience, including A. Edward Newton. An avid collector with a penchant for English neoclassical writers, Newton was well known for his articles and books on collecting, and his *Amenities of Book-Collecting* and *A Magnificent Farce and Other Diversions of a Book-Collector* were bestsellers. Book collecting, he boasted to *Saturday Evening Post* readers in 1927, is an "intellectual recreation." Collectors "come to know a good deal about some one thing and something about a good many things, and this goes to make what is usually called an educated man—and we have none too many of them." Indeed, for Newton and others, the desire to collect books was a natural effect of wanting to better oneself intellectually and, in turn, socially—a desire Newton identified and celebrated as particularly American. "People in this country, at least, are dynamic," he proclaimed in a 1929 *World's Work* article. "They are continually coming up from the bottom, and in ever increasing numbers. Consciously or otherwise, we ape our superiors; Tom Jones and Tom Brown … having arrived, ask themselves, 'Why should I not have first editions?' … This, or something like this," Newton crowed, "is going on all over this great country."[21]

What "this" represented to Newton and others was the salutary spread of culture to the American people. From the vantage point of the humanistic history

[21] Newton, "What To Collect—And Why," 129, 16; "This Business of Books," 70.

advanced by Newton's explanation, an appreciation for book collecting had expanded not simply from wealthy to middle-class buyers, but from a "few old gentlemen of literary or antiquarian tastes" to the "man in the streets" (albeit, Newton concedes, in "important streets"). Book collecting's popularity, in other words, signaled for Newton the growth of refined tastes throughout the country. According to him, the increase in book collectors actually implied no less than the "democratic spread of an appreciation of the better things of life and an increasing recognition of the value of the best that has been said and thought in the world; which," he reminded readers, "is Matthew Arnold's definition of culture." Starrett likewise allied book collecting with possessing culture. In fact, for Starrett, the cultural associations of collecting so outweighed the taint of possible financial profit that even those who collected solely for money participated in a "cultured" profession.[22]

By invoking culture and the activities that defined a cultured person, Newton and Starrett were engaging in a discussion that had preoccupied Americans since the colonial period. Economic and social changes across the nineteenth century contributed to an ideology, well established by the start of the twentieth century, of culture as independent of wealth and as something that could be acquired, particularly through books. This view rested on the genteel liberalism most famously espoused by Arnold, whose mandate for pursuing "the best," as judged by elite thinkers, was promoted by American critics. By the 1920s, competing ideas about culture posed some threat to this genteel tradition. One such spur was the booming economy, which seemed to suggest that business

[22] Ibid.; Starrett, "Diamond in the Dust Heap," 70.

and not cultural acumen offered the path to success. Even so, as Joan Rubin has documented, the proliferation during the interwar decades of ventures aimed at bestowing culture on the American people attests to Americans' continued anxiety about being sufficiently cultured.[23] "There is a definite hunger," one contemporary journalist observed, "for some indefinite thing which [men and women] perhaps call culture. This hunger they are satisfying by a reaching out for books and book information."[24] Book information—in the forms of outlines of information, etiquette manuals, and other guides to what one *should* know—topped bestseller lists throughout the decade. This hunger likewise bolstered the sales of literary works and was seized upon by marketers of the newly begun Book-of-the-Month Club and the Harvard Classics, the latter being found, one 1927 advertisement promised, in "thousands of cultured American homes." In fact, American appetites were whetted by no less than Vice President Calvin Coolidge in a 1924 *Delineator* article cogently titled "Books for Better Homes." Expounding on the merits of books, Coolidge catalogued their cultivating tendencies—their abilities to sharpen an individual's mind and "spiritual side." Yet, in Coolidge's estimation, the power of books was not harnessed solely by reading them: "You must do more than read [books]," he urged readers. "You must own them, make them part of you."[25] Underpinning this exhortation was a familiar precept: books have the power both to expand one's mind through their

[23] See especially chapter 1 of Rubin's *Making of Middlebrow Culture*, to which my understanding of the history of culture in America is also indebted
[24] John Farrar, qtd. in Tebbel, *Between Covers*, 273.
[25] Qtd. in Benton, *Beauty and the Book*, 17, 16. For insightful discussions of the role of books in the commodification of culture during this period, see chapter 1 of Benton and chapter 4 of Radway, *A Feeling for Books*.

contents and to signal one's refinement through their status as objects to be possessed.

The popularity of book collecting in the 1920s should be viewed as a product of this aspiration for culture. The activity neatly capitalized on arguments, forcefully made by Coolidge and others, for books' dual cultivating properties, as both enlightening texts and meaningful objects. Furthermore, there existed a crucial connection between the attainment of culture and the collecting of modern firsts over other types of books. Charting the hypothetical progress of his American everymen, Tom Jones and Tom Brown, toward becoming book collectors, Newton illustrates this connection on two grounds. First, he conjectures that, unlike Jones and Brown, "the men above them" received a classical education, and consequently these men likely collect "books in which the Joneses and the Browns find it pretty difficult to take an interest." Instead of the works of Aristotle and Cicero, Jones and Brown want "books written by men very like themselves for men like themselves." Second, Newton estimates that Jones and Brown only have a few dollars to spend. Given these factors, he surmises, they wind up with a copy of Kipling's *Captains Courageous*, and they are on their way to becoming collectors. By this account, it is the activity of book collecting—whatever the books may be—that is cultured. Though Jones and Brown lack the education and money of their "superiors," they may still participate in this refined hobby by way of modern firsts, which are more in line with their tastes and their finances. Yet by other accounts, collecting modern firsts was a cultivated activity in itself. The *Post,* for instance, referenced the "genteel" practice of collecting living authors. And as some would have it,

collecting the moderns presented the same signs of refinement as collecting the established masters of literature. As the *Living Age* proclaimed, "It is quite as recherché nowadays to own a set of Conrad, all in first editions, as it is to own a first folio [of Shakespeare]."[26]

However, at the same time that popular writing on collecting promoted the cultured status the activity bestowed, it also presented what might be a paradox for some: in order to be a successful collector—and thus attain this cultured status—one needed to be a cultured person in the first place. Starrett, for instance, warned *Post* readers that "only persons of some culture and intelligence may hope to be consistently successful." And central to this success was good taste. As Starrett advised, the "right taste" was essential in leading collectors to the right selections.[27] John Winterich in his *Primer* offered a similar message by emphasizing that his "small-salaried creature's" success depended on his being a "person of taste and cultivation, an intelligent and discriminating, but non-professional critic."[28] The message was clear: successful collectors need not have millions, but they did need culture.

Fortunately then for those wary of their own taste and cultivation, there was plenty of readily available advice about how to acquire such culture in the form of recommendations about which modern firsts to collect. Beginning with "Diamond in the Dust Heap," Starrett's *Post* articles recommended particular collectible authors and titles. By the following year's "ABC of First Editions," however, Starrett appears less forthcoming with these recommendations. He

[26] Newton, "This Business of Books," 70; Malvern, "Tomorrow's Rarities," 33; "Modern Firsts," 573.
[27] Starrett, "ABC of First Editions," 34; "Diamond in the Dust Heap," 70.
[28] Winterich, *Primer of Book Collecting*, 195.

acknowledges the "novice's problem of what writers to collect," but instead of immediately suggesting these writers, he directs readers to learn about collectible books by studying booksellers' catalogues; he also encourages potential collectors to seek out "poets and fictionists and essayists whose work is most highly regarded by the best practicing critics." Starrett, in other words, attempts to instruct readers in how they might develop the right taste for themselves. His hesitancy simply to tell readers what to collect becomes more apparent still when, even as he eventually relents and lists names, he introduces them only as "hints to the caliber" of collectible writers. In the end, though, these hints take the form of fifty-two authors "who safely may be collected" and whose works *Post* readers presumably could search for in local bookstores.

Starrett's *Post* articles certainly reached the widest audience, but the growing population of new collectors could find ample advice about whom to collect in several periodicals and handbooks. Newton offered recommendations in his popular *This Book Collecting Game*, where he included a list of "100 Good Novels." The list, he explained, was in response to the hundreds of letters he received from people describing themselves as "of some little means and ordinary intelligence" who wanted advice about what books to collect.[29]

The Fashion of Collecting

The popularity of collecting, its cultured undertones, and the proliferation of guides to collectible authors were thus heralded by some as signs of an increasingly cultivated population. Yet this very combination of factors rankled

[29] Starrett, "ABC of First Editions," 76.

other observers of the popularity of collecting modern firsts. Like many, John Carter, the bibliographer and prolific writer on book collecting, bristled at what he identified as superficial motives behind the trend. "Book collecting," he complained of the period, "had … come to be regarded as 'the done thing' among many persons desirous of being thought cultured." Carter and others similarly denounced the vogue for collecting modern firsts as "fashionable," invoking the term's connotation of superficiality—and thus its implicit contrast to true cultivation. To these critics of the modern firsts trend, the practice of collecting modern authors was abused by upwardly mobile members of the middle classes who viewed it as little more than the newest rung on their social-climbing ladder. Writing in H. L. Mencken's monthly review, *American Mercury*, George H. Sargent sneered that "there are those who buy modern first editions as they learn to play mah jong … It seems to them as necessary to be a book collector as it did to other folks a quarter of a century ago to be seen at the Horse Show." Particularly galling to Carter and Sargent were their impressions that these collectors did not actually read the books they were collecting. "Most of the men who are buying modern first editions," Sargent argued, "do not attempt to estimate the literary quality of their purchases…. They may collect Amy Lowell because she writes free verse of which they have no adequate conception save that it seems to be in fashion." Carter claimed that the modern firsts trend lent credence to George Bernard Shaw's snipe that "one begins, naturally, by plundering the collectors, who never read anything."[30]

[30] Carter, *Taste and Technique*, 39; Sargent, "Modern First Editions," 217-18.

For Carter, the fashion for collecting modern firsts was not simply annoying; rather, he insisted that the trend also carried a hazardous component—one he blamed in part for the field's eventual bust. The danger of the fashion for collecting modern firsts, Carter contended in a 1931 article, was the "herd-instinct" motivating it, which focused attention on certain authors and books to the detriment of a thriving book market's necessary diversity. According to Carter, the "fashion of the moment" seemed to dictate most modern firsts collectors' choices. "If only people would follow their own taste, or, if they have none but must collect, try to find some untrodden path in the huge prairie which is literature," he lamented, "they would find that there are quite enough books to go around."[31]

Carter centered his complaints on the "average" modern firsts collector, and he couched these complaints within concerns for the health of the book market. But his accusations of herd-mindedness sound remarkably similar to those lobbed more broadly by cultural critics of the period who saw a sheep-like consumerism dominating what Mencken labeled the "booboisie" and Virginia Woolf, in her famous essay on the middlebrow, denounced as the "betwixt and between." Instead of pursuing their own independent tastes, these critics complained, this population sought what they believed a cultured individual should enjoy: their sense of etiquette overpowered their sense of taste, leading them to ask, in Woolf's formulation, "What is the right book to praise?" just as they would ask, "What is the right knife to use?" At the same time, literary works deemed "too easy, insular, and smug" came to be denigrated during the twenties

[31] Carter, "Looking Backward," 300, 331.

as middlebrow, an epithet applied to a wide range of popular literature, from the romances of Warwick Deeping and Gilbert Frankau to the folksy lyrics of James Whitcomb Riley and Sam Walter Foss.[32]

Like these critics of middlebrow taste, Carter, at the same time that he chastised "average" collectors for their inability to choose for themselves, also ridiculed the choices they did make. Even "among the contemporary British authors of an eminence likely to attract the less enterprising collectors," he later observed of the 1920s modern firsts trend,

> fashion dictated with its usual brusquerie. Norman Douglas was fashionable, Max Beerbohm was not (nor, quite inexplicably, ever has been). *Ulysses* was unsaleable at 10 per cent of the price of *My Lady Nicotine*. Galsworthy's earliest and least interesting books were extravagantly esteemed, but Wells and Arnold Bennett (save for one book) went a-begging. There was a brisk vogue for D. H. Lawrence and A. E. Coppard; Virginia Woolf and E. M. Forster were ignored.[33]

To some extent, a survey of the period's bookseller and auction records bears out Carter's claims. Yet it also reveals some exaggerations on his part. Beerbohm was actually a fixture in bookseller catalogues, and collectors sought his works at values far beyond their publication prices. (As a matter of fact, a 1924 *Fortnightly Review* article pinpointed Beerbohm as one author for whom

---

[32] Woolf, "Middlebrow," 180, 181. For more on the middlebrow designation of the authors I've noted, see Brown, introduction to "Investigating the Middlebrow," Humble, *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel, 1920s to 1950*, and Irmscher, "Popular Poetry."
[33] Carter, *Taste and Technique*, 47.

collectors were paying "not merely excessive but rather absurd" prices.[34]) *My Lady Nicotine* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1890), J. M. Barrie's humorous ode to smoking, was consistently more expensive than *Ulysses* (Shakespeare & Co., 1922), though the latter was hardly "unsaleable" at ten percent of the former: a copy of Barrie's work sold at auction in 1930 for $260, and Scribner's offered a copy in that year for $500, but during the 1926 to 1927 auction season, signed copies of *Ulysses* sold for values between $105 and $140.[35] Broadly speaking, Carter's claims were accurate—*My Lady Nicotine* was far more expensive than *Ulysses*, for example. But exaggerating these claims also allowed Carter to validate his sense that collectors who sought fashionable books could not only be choosing blindly, they could also be choosing badly—their supposed inexplicable inattention to Beerbohm, for instance, or their extravagant esteem for Galsworthy's lesser works. These exaggerations, that is to say, helped Carter to solicit the message that those following the fashion were not necessarily following good taste.

Equally irritating to George Troxell, who attacked the "Fashion of Collecting" in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, was what he viewed as the bibliographical ignorance of these new collectors. For Troxell, the modern firsts trend had engendered the annoying misconception that book collecting could be done by anyone, regardless of knowledge or effort. "It all sounds so delightfully simple," he imagined potential collectors assuming. "A walk through almost any part of London or New York—three or four volumes in a dusty window—and the

[34] Chancellor, "Cost of Books" 171.
[35] *My Lady Nicotine*: *ABPC* 36:40 [American Art Assoc., 12-13 Mar. 1930]; *Scribner's* 89. *Ulysses*: *ABPC* 33:345 [Anderson Galleries, 16 Dec. 1926, 8 Feb. 1927].

explorer emerges with a 1903 'Dynasts,' a 'Chance' with the correct title page."[36] In reality, Hardy's 1903 *The Dynasts* (Macmillan) and Conrad's 1913 *Chance* (Methuen) were among the scarcest and most prized modern firsts of the period: due to a publishing postponement in each case, there existed fewer than one hundred copies of Part First of *The Dynasts* bearing the original 1903 publication date and only fifty copies of *Chance* with an uncancelled 1913 title page.[37] By the time of Troxell's 1929 article, a copy of the 1913 *Chance* had sold at auction for $2,300, and a set of *The Dynasts*, including Part First in the desirable 1903 issue, was purchased at the same sale for $2,350 (over $31,300 and nearly $32,000, respectively, in today's dollars).[38] That a new collector would simply stumble upon these scarce copies during an afternoon stroll through the bookshops was laughable to experienced collectors. For this misconception, Troxell blamed "gossipy volumes dealing with the 'color' of buying books in old out of the way shops." Here he was certainly referencing the several book-collecting memoirs appearing during the decade that boasted of unbelievable finds in secondhand bookstores. But he may as well have implicated Vincent Starrett's "Diamond in the Dustheap," which broadcast to a wide readership the pleasures and potential financial benefits lying behind the doors of secondhand shops. "Whatever else it

---

[36] Troxell, "Fashion of Collecting," 578

[37] As Hardy bibliographer Richard Purdy has explained, "*The Dynasts*, Part First, was ready for publication in December 1903, but the American printers had not finished their edition. The book was therefore kept back because of copyright law, the title-page canceled, and a new one altering the date to 1904 substituted." In January 1904, Macmillan released an edition of 1,000 copies with the 1904 title page, yet their 1903-04 statement shows 103 presentation copies of both the 1903 and 1904 impressions of *The Dynasts*, and Purdy estimates that a "good proportion" of these were from the first issue (123). A postponement similarly resulted in Methuen issuing a 3,000-copy edition of *Chance* with a 1914 title page and a fifty-copy edition with an uncancelled 1913 title page.

[38] *ABPC* 34:133 [American Art Assoc., 1 Feb. 1928]. Similar sets of *The Dynasts* sold in the surrounding years for $2,200, and a copy of the 1913 *Chance*, inscribed by Conrad to Richard Curle, sold at the Apr. 1927 Curle sale for $2,225.00.

may be," Troxell corrected, "book collecting is not consistently picturesque: it requires constant work, constant self-education in bibliography, and a capacity for learning from mistakes that is not given to everyone."[39]

By identifying traits that a book collector required, Troxell implied that collecting was not within everyone's potential. Similarly, this notion—that book collecting was not for everyone—underlay criticisms made by Carter and Sargent, who suggested that the ranks of modern firsts collectors were bloated with non-bibliophiles. This clamoring about the new school of modern firsts collectors—their ignorance, their pursuit of social advancement, their lack of literary taste—would reach a crescendo in a 1931 *Publishers' Weekly* article lampooning the trend's spread to the masses. Neil Trimble's dystopian "Future of Firsts" asked *Weekly* readers to imagine a bookshop five years in the future, a shop that would be barren of educated patrons with an appreciation for literature. Instead, Trimble claims, one will encounter here a mechanic, searching for a "first of *The Differential Gear*." Trimble envisions the future bookseller gladly handing over a copy of the imaginary title, "in excellent condition, Henry Ford presentation copy with his initials on the end paper. Only $45." The mechanic will examine the book "for fully a half hour" before becoming "animated once more": "Well, there's the 'H. F.' for sure, in the book," Trimble has the mechanic dumbly exclaim. "And them's Ford's initials so I guess it's all right. Wrap it up."

---

[39] Troxell, "Fashion of Collecting," 578. What Troxell found irresponsible about collecting memoirs, others found plain boring. E. L. Pearson amusingly summarized "the dull adventures—how they went into such and such a dealer's place, were offered a book for so many hundreds, but did not buy, how they repented after reaching home, and telegraphed—and so secured the treasure—all these personal and unimportant details add to the general dreariness" ("Sport of Kings," 272).

Trimble warranted his satire on the notion that the popularity of book collecting had descended too far down the intellectual hierarchy. An ungrammatical and possibly illiterate manual laborer, Trimble's first editions collector of the future is also a gullible consumer, barely skilled enough to recognize a set of initials and thus certainly unqualified to judge finer bibliographical merits. Furthermore, he has no appreciation for literature, seeking instead what seems to be a utilitarian handbook. In other words, he pointedly lacks any of the cultivation that Newton and Starrett promised to the modern firsts collector. By portraying this collector as a dimwitted mechanic with no interest in literary works, Trimble in effect mocked the democratic view—espoused by Newton and Starrett, and spread through popular publications such as the *Saturday Evening Post*—of modern firsts collecting as an activity for all.[40]

That Trimble's collector is a mechanic is undoubtedly meant as a derisive suggestion of his intellectual shortcomings. But his profession might be further taken to signal his mechanical devotion to the dictates of society—and, specifically, to collecting as "the thing to do." Indeed, to read Trimble's article as satirizing the modern firsts collector's seeming inability to exercise independent choice is supported by the title the mechanic seeks—a book essentially about a large cog—and its author—the progenitor, for many, of an automated, machine-like citizenry. These concerns about the standardization of collecting tastes echoed more general worries expressed during the period about the effects on individual identities of mass production and increased commodity consumption. As Janice Radway has shown, such worries were frequently fixed on the

[40] Trimble, "Future of Firsts," 978.

middlebrow consumer, whom critics saw as overly willing to submit to the tastes of others. In her study of the Book-of-the-Month Club and middlebrow culture, Radway explains how these fears incited an essential line of attack against the club, which seemed to its detractors to epitomize the standardization of literary tastes.

Additionally, like many who worried over the new school of modern firsts collectors, critics of the Book-of-the-Month Club complained that its members were simply using books to effect the veneer of culture.[41] Radway locates within these complaints fears about the disruption of social prestige. She argues that the Book-of-the-Month Club fostered the notion of book ownership as cultural capital, thereby causing its detractors to worry that "if culture was only one more material object, if it could be manipulated to produce the artificial façade of a made self, then it could no longer function as the special, unmarked mark of human distinction." Similarly, while a "herd-mindedness" of modern firsts collectors as identified by Carter and satirized by Trimble undoubtedly threatened the health of the book market, the widespread popularity of collecting modern firsts also could be viewed as a threat to those who staked their own cultural competence and social distinction to the collecting of books.

And if Radway's insights into those who denounced the Book-of-the-Month Club can be useful in understanding critics of the modern firsts trend, the relationship between book clubs and collecting modern firsts shared an even stronger connection in the First Edition Society. Created in 1927 and directed by

[41] These anxieties about superficial book ownership were not limited to critics of the Book-of-the-Month Club nor to critics of the modern firsts trend, of course. Benton describes widespread worries over the popular pursuit of book culture, rehearsed most famously in novels such as *Babbitt* and *The Great Gatsby*. See Benton, *Beauty and the Book*, chapter 1.

Burton Rascoe, literary editor of the *New York Herald Tribune*, the First Edition Society resembled the Book-of-the-Month Club in its mail-order format: First Edition Society subscribers would receive one book a month by mail, and they would pay the book's retail price, with no book to exceed $3.00. Selections were chosen by the Society's jury. In addition to Rascoe, this included Rex Beach, the novelist and playwright; Richard E. Burton, the Columbia University professor and popular literary lecturer; the journalist and humor writer Irvin S. Cobb; Bob Davis, editor of *The Argosy*; and Sophie Kerr, author and managing editor of *Woman's Home Companion*. Like the Book-of-the-Month Club, the First Edition Society attempted to appeal to subscribers' desires to be in the know and to be guided by leading lights of the literary world. "By joining the First Edition Society," one ad promised, "you will be among the very first each month to read and discuss the outstanding novel which will be on everybody's tongue." Prominently featuring headshots of each jury member, the ad does not explain the criteria by which selections are chosen nor does it provide credentials for the jury; instead, the ad appears to presume that viewers would recognize the jury as worthy literary judges either by their names or by the refined poses they struck, as in the case of Burton, tilting his head on his hand as if deep in thought, his brow furrowed around his pince-nez, or Cobb, drawing on a cigar while pensively gazing off into the distance.[42]

[42] The First Edition Society announced its formation in a prospectus appearing in *Publishers' Weekly*, 27 Feb. 1927, 603. According to the prospectus, advertisements were to run in *Arts and Decoration*, the *New York Times*, the *New York Tribune*, and the *Literary Digest*. The advertisements cited here appeared in the *New York Times* Book Review Section on 13 Mar. and 20 Mar. 1927.

But if the First Edition Society resembled the Book-of-the-Month Club, or the Literary Guild—the mail-order subscription club led by Carl Van Doren, which also began in 1927—the First Edition Society distinguished itself among the new crop of book clubs with its focus on providing first editions. Ads for the Society pledged that subscribers would "receive only *first edition* books just as soon as they are released by the publisher each month." Those who signed on early with the First Edition Society had the first selection, Sinclair Lewis's *Elmer Gantry* (Harcourt, Brace), mailed to them on the day it was published; in April 1927, subscribers would receive May Sinclair's *The Allinghams* (Macmillan), and in May, *Bread and Fire* by Charles Rumford Walker (Houghton Mifflin). Presumably, each title was chosen because it was "outstanding" and slated to be "on everybody's tongue." But the intended appeal for First Edition Society subscribers also lay in the opportunity to own these books in first edition with the expectation that their worth would appreciate. As the ad bluntly assured potential subscribers, "First Edition Books increase in actual value."

From Bookmen to Businessmen

Critics of the modern firsts trend worried over the possibility of books being manipulated as cultural capital. The notion that one could become cultivated by purchasing the right items shed an uneasy light on the connections between culture and commerce. And these worries were seemingly bolstered by the extraordinary sums that collectors began to pay for modern firsts during the 1920s, which in turn furthered critics' sense that the modern firsts trend rested on illegitimate motives. To be sure, values of works by modern authors grew

exponentially over the decade. In 1925, a first edition of Rudyard Kipling's *The Smith Administration* (Wheeler, 1891)—one of six known copies that had survived Kipling's suppression of the edition—sold for the already remarkable price of $4,100. By 1927, A. S. W. Rosenbach would pay $14,000 (over $187,000 in today's dollars) for a copy of the slim octavo, the highest sum paid at that time for a work by a living author. First editions by Joseph Conrad, John Galsworthy, George Moore, and other living authors also saw incredible increases over the decade. Bookseller Walter M. Hill offered Galsworthy's *The Man of Property*, for instance, for $75 in 1925, and copies sold at auction for similar prices in the early 1920s. By 1929, however, the first edition was regularly fetching more than three times that amount at auction, and a first impression went as high as $1,150 in 1930 (almost $16,000 in today's dollars).[43]

Soaring prices were by no means confined to modern firsts; in fact, they reached their apogee in the well-known sale of the composer Jerome Kern's library, which was rich in late-eighteenth- and mid-nineteenth-century literature. Held in January 1929, the Kern sale realized the astounding sum of more than 1.7 million dollars; that Kern had collected most of his library during the decade further underscores the extraordinary price advances over the 1920s. The proceeds from Kern's sale surpassed all expectations, and the sale's widespread media coverage suggested the investment potential in books. Citing Kern's net profit of over 300 percent, the collector Barton Currie asked *World's Work* readers, "Could any conservative broker who had carefully guided a client in the

[43] Hill, Apr. 1925; *ABPC* 36:224 [American Art Assoc., 16-17 Dec. 1929]. *The Man of Property* was first printed 23 Mar. 1906 in an impression of 1,500 copies; the second impression was issued in Apr. 1906.

purchase of gilt-edge bonds over the same period of time boast of such a result?"[44]

Currie was just one of many who recognized affinities between the rare book market and the stock market. As early as 1920, the *Literary Digest* was discussing "Wall Street Methods with Rare Books," and commentators throughout the decade analogized books to stocks. By the beginning of 1929, the connection between the two markets appeared even more tangible when Babson's Statistical Organization, the Massachusetts investment management business founded by Roger Babson, began offering a Book Research and Valuation Service. Its purpose, Babson's firm claimed, was to "furnish bibliographical data, unbiased valuations, [and] authenticity and marketability reports" to collectors.[45] What Babson offered, of course, was the type of information long pursued by rare book experts, but its source in an investment firm marked a definite recognition of books as capital. The transfer of expertise that Babson's service implied, from bookmen to businessmen, also dismayed many, including a *New York World* columnist who satirized the expansion of American business into the rare book field:

> No doubt we are headed for a book exchange, with quotations and a ticker service for booklovers. This may not be such a bad idea. Jaded editors, who are now kept busy telephoning rare-book

[44] "Book Gambling Game," 33.
[45] "New Enterprise at Babson Park," 3. The movement of Babson's Statistic Organization into services for book collectors was likely influenced by Roger Babson's first wife Grace, who was a prolific collector of materials by and related to Isaac Newton. In 1919, Roger Babson founded Babson College, which continues to specialize in business management courses and houses the Grace K. Babson Collection; Roger Babson is also remembered for predicting the 1929 Stock Market Crash.

> dealers for collectors who want advice, will merely consult the tape to discover whether there are any big blocks of Crane, Ltd. on the market; how JC is holding up; to what extent the erratic fluctuations in GBS are due to the bearish demonstrations by GKC; whether RADHALL has finally reached the big board or is still on the curb; whether SHKSPER, 1st Folio preferred, has gone up 100 points since the last transaction, and what is the present rating of Knopf German 5s.[46]

The absurdity of this book exchange relies on an accepted divide between the worlds of culture and commerce. If this divide is inevitably shaken by book collecting, its tenability is made more ridiculous, the *World* columnist contended, in the face of book investment and particularly speculation. Some attempted to shore up the distinctions between collecting and speculating—and, consequently, the integrity of the former—by insisting on the separate motivations behind the book and stock markets. Currie, for example, offered the defense that "book collecting is essentially a gentle mania—or has been so regarded; whereas stock speculation is a passionate frenzy to get something for nothing." At the same time, commentators worried that a love of money rather than books was prompting the growing ranks of collectors, both wealthy and not. Currie cited "certain enormously rich men" among these new collectors: although to some of these men "books have about the same interest and charm as has a case of canned sardines," they were, according to Currie, spending large sums on books by "following the example set by that 'superman of finance,' J. P. Morgan." Many

[46] Rpt. in "Stock-Jobbing in Books," 24.

others feared a prevalent get-rich-quick attitude toward collecting. In fact, even as they advertised the possibilities for financial gain in collecting modern firsts, those addressing popular audiences frequently warned against embarking on the activity solely for profit. Starrett actually delivered both messages in the same breath in his closing to "Diamond in the Dust Heap": he notes the high values of modern authors' early works but then, in the following sentence, turns abruptly to admonish readers that the "prime requisites for collecting are a flair for books and a genuine love of the game. Lacking that," he cautions, "let no one attempt the gentle art of book collecting, whatever its rewards." Starrett was so concerned with imposing this warning on *Post* readers that his next article for the magazine began with the very same lines.[47]

If some writers insisted on book collecting's primary function as a "gentle art," there were yet others who openly focused on its rewards. Despite its title, Henry de Halsalle's *The Romance of Modern First Editions* was explicitly *not* aimed at the bibliophile: it did not, as he made plain, dwell on the "joys," "quest," or "spiritual effect" of book collecting. Instead, De Halsalle candidly advocated collecting books for profit, expressing in the introduction his intention to "point out how book-collecting may be made a profitable hobby, so much so that a quite modest expenditure carried over a few years may result in a collection of volumes worth a not inconsiderable sum of money." In particular, he aimed his advice at young people. For the "boy or girl in average circumstances," he counseled, "books wisely chosen in youth, and cherished, may well become a valuable property in years to come." Similarly, even as Starrett reminded readers that

[47] Currie, "Book Gambling Game," 33; Starrett, "Diamond in the Dust Heap," 70.

successful collecting demanded hard work and a love of books, he also frankly contended that "there is no shame to be taken … in speculating with books," and like De Halsalle he suggested that it could provide an excellent income. Some advocates of speculating minimized fears about the venture's risks. "There is no possibility of a serious slump," De Halsalle cheerily assured potential collectors. "Certainly there has never been a luckier time to begin."[48]

Yet by 1931, when De Halsalle published these lines, a serious slump was already underway. In the end, many of those who sought to make money speculating in modern firsts would have seen their schemes fail. Parallel booms in the stock and rare book markets were matched by busts in each, and sky-rocketing book values began plummeting in the early years of the 1930s. The Kern sale marked the culmination of booming book prices. By the following year, auction room prices had been, as one observer put it, severely "chastened." As a matter of fact, accounting for inflation, several items in the Kern sale still have not surpassed the records they set in 1929. The bust affected most collecting fields, but the moderns were particularly affected: just as their prices had boomed the highest during the twenties, they also slumped the hardest. Works by such authors as Galsworthy, Barrie, Douglas, and Shaw that had surged in value during the 1920s depreciated rapidly in the early 1930s. A copy of *The Little Minister* (Cassell, 1891) in original condition was priced as high as $1,000 by Walter M. Hill in 1929, but copies of Barrie's work in their original cloth sold as low as $22.50 at auction in the following five years. *The Man of Property*, which

[48] De Halsalle, *Romance of Modern First Editions*, ix, xii; Starrett, "Diamond in the Dust Heap," 70; De Halsalle, 109.

was selling at auction for more than $200 in 1929, typically fetched less than $100 in the early thirties. And Hill offered a copy of Douglas's *Siren Land* (Dent, 1911) for $100 in 1927, while in 1932 a collector could purchase a copy from the bookseller for half that amount.[49]

First in a 1931 *Publishers' Weekly* article and later in subsequent writings, John Carter discussed the causes of the bust, focusing particularly on the great drop in modern firsts. One of these causes, already encountered, was the "herd instinct," which he claimed concentrated attention on a limited pool of titles and thereby stifled the variety necessary to a healthy market. For Carter, the other two causes were related. The second was a disregard among collectors, or even ignorance of, a fundamental characteristic of collectible books: rarity. That some early works by modern authors were published in small quantities or ephemeral formats is certain. But the relatively large print runs of most modern works combined with their very newness made them less likely to be scarce, and media attention to high prices eventually exposed the prevalence of certain works. Hence books such as the first English collected edition of Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga* (Heinemann, 1922) and first editions of Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (Macmillan, 1894) and Shaw's *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant* (Grant Richards, 1898) could not maintain their high prices once it was widely recognized that copies were not uncommon.[50] The first impression of the single-volume collected

---

[49] *The Little Minister*: Hill, Nov. 1929; *ABPC* 40:32 [Carr sale, Nov. 1933]. *The Man of Property*: *ABPC* 36:224 [American Art Assoc., 16-17 Dec. 1929, 11-12 Mar. 1931]. *Siren Land*: Hill, Nov. 1927; Hill 1932. Condition certainly played a role in some of these sale figures: the copy of *The Little Minister* that Hill offered for $1000 was likely in fine condition, whereas the copies that went for $65 and $22.50 were described as showing some wear. Nevertheless, the discrepancy between these high and low figures is dramatic.

[50] Carter, "Looking Backward," 330.

edition *The Forsyte Saga*, for instance, was of 10,000 copies, and its dramatic rise and fall is apparent in the period's auction records: by 1930, copies of the cloth-bound first impression, published only eight years earlier, had climbed as high as $320; two years later, copies sold for just under $100; and by 1935, the price of this common book had plummeted to $35.[51]

In fact, this second problem—a disregard for rarity—was an inherent flaw of the First Edition Society and may explain its failure after only three months of operation. The appeal of the Society rested on the promise put forth in its ads that first editions rise in value. The Society's first selection, however, had a large first edition print run: the copy of *Elmer Gantry* that subscribers received would have been one of 100,000. The second selection, *The Allinghams*, also had a large first edition print run; on top of this, subscribers received the American Macmillan edition, which followed the preferred English Hutchinson edition. First Edition Society subscribers may not have recognized this lack of rarity on their own, but *Publishers' Weekly* wasted no time in pointing it out: "the larger the edition the less likelihood of increase and it so happens that the club has emphasized this difficulty in its first selections."[52]

---

[51] The first impression of *The Forsyte Saga* is distinguished from the second impression by a genealogical chart appearing at the front of the work: in the first impression, the chart folds out to the right; in the second, it folds out to the left. Of the 10,000 copies comprising the first impression, 9,450 were cloth bound, and 550 were leather; all the examples I refer to here are cloth-bound copies. *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant* also experienced a dramatic rise and fall, as evidenced by the catalogues of bookseller Walter M. Hill: in 1920, Hill offered an "exceptionally fine clean copy" of the work for $25; by 1929, the firm was asking $500 for a similar copy; and by 1937, the price for a copy had dropped to $30.

[52] "The Book Clubs," 1499. By chance, First Edition Society members actually may have received what turned out to be a valuable copy of *Elmer Gantry*. The first issue of the first edition appeared with the title printed as "Elmer Cantry" on the spine. It is not known whether Society members received this first issue, a fine copy of which was being offered by one ABAA bookseller in March 2013 at $3,500.

Upon the First Edition Society's failure, its subscriptions were taken over by the Book-of-the-Month Club. See "Books and Authors."

This disregard for rarity was perpetrated most dangerously, Carter suggested, by his third cause: speculators. Perhaps most insidious to Carter among his "trinity of evils," speculators not only lacked personal affection for the titles they collected, but they also collected for profit only.[53] They thus flagrantly threatened the view of book collecting as an art, and they affected the buying capabilities of other collectors. The heavy unloading during the early 1930s of books considered desirable during the boom indeed suggested that the increased number of collectors had been inflated by speculators; additionally, book prices had certainly been raised to artificial heights by individuals attempting to profit in the book collecting world. On the theory of backing a rising market, these speculators followed the leads of some booksellers and, undoubtedly, the advice easily accessed in guides and magazines. In his published writings, Carter did not accuse particular individuals of speculating, but others did. In fact, among those charged with valuing business over books were William Harris Arnold, Barton Currie, and A. Edward Newton. The noted Americana collector Frederick Skiff, for one, accused Currie of being a "speculative or commercial collector," while the Americana bookseller Charles P. Everitt implicated Arnold and Newton, calling the latter a "prince among speculators."[54]

These allegations were based on the private collecting activities of Arnold, Currie, and Newton. Yet it does not seem coincidental that these three figures also wrote on the subject of collecting for popular audiences. As these accusations might also suggest, then, by calling a mainstream audience's

[53] Carter, "Looking Backward," 331.
[54] Skiff, *Adventures in Americana*, 5; Everitt, *Adventures of a Treasure Hunter*, 64-65.

attention to the financial benefits of collecting and by recommending particular books to collect, these popular writers encouraged a culture of speculation.

Leaving the Herd: Another View of the Average Collector

The popular writers accused of speculating certainly advertised the potential economic payoffs of collecting modern firsts in middlebrow publications such as the *Saturday Evening Post*. In discussing his reasons for the bust in modern firsts, however, John Carter was careful to distinguish between what he may have seen as middlebrow collectors—motivated by a "herd-mindedness"—and collectors whose speculative deals inflated the market. And if he felt that both groups were to blame for the fall of the modern firsts market, then he also drew a dividing line between the two on the matter of agency: where the middlebrow collector passively followed along with the "herd," as Carter would have it, speculators actively engaged in manipulating the book market. Ultimately though, it is clear that for Carter and others who worried about the popularity of modern firsts, whether or not middlebrow collectors sought to make money, they, like speculative collectors, still pursued books for illegitimate reasons.

Carter's history of the trend, as outlined over his several publications, was informed by his sense that modern firsts collecting was dominated during this period by what he called the "lesser collectors." This evaluative criticism, however, has obscured not only the significance of the trend to these collectors but also the means by which they helped to shape the modern firsts field. Modern firsts opened up to a middle-class, middlebrow population an activity that had been associated with a privileged elite. What critics of the trend

resented, its advocates touted: that the average American had taken up collecting with the hope of attaining the culture, prestige, and perhaps the wealth of those who had traditionally dominated the activity. To some extent, these collectors indeed may have been "aping" their "superiors," as A. Edward Newton gladly saw his American everymen, Tom Jones and Tom Brown, doing. But, to return briefly to Newton's discussion of these everymen, any hypothetical explanation of what led this population to modern firsts usefully points to how average collectors shaped their own book-collecting field: Jones and Brown lacked the money to pursue other types of books, but they also sought works suited to their own tastes. In other words, whether motivated by their finances or by their tastes, modern firsts collectors transformed the book collecting world by defining their own canon of collectible books.

Further still, rather than aping their highbrow superiors, average collectors were encouraged to see themselves as engaging in pioneering work—significantly, in the realm of literary scholarship. In fact, even as Vincent Starrett sanctioned financial speculation with modern firsts, he also promoted a sort of scholarly speculation as well, one that trades not on future prices but on future critical attention. *Saturday Evening Post* readers, he contended, could have a lasting influence on scholarly work by collecting and preserving modern first editions. To these readers, he gave his "considered opinion that in no small degree is the fate of an author's work, with reference to its survival, in the hands of the collectors," and he cited titles that would have been forgotten were it not

for collectors.[55] From the field's beginnings, collectors touted modern firsts as an area in which history had not yet determined lasting literary value. Continuing the arguments made by early collectors of modern firsts, Starrett suggested that even the average collector could act as the preserver of works with value to future literary studies, or even to current ones. The preface to John Gawsworth's *Ten Contemporaries*—a 1932 compendium of modern author bibliographies—advanced a similar point by maintaining that the literary scholar is "often at the mercy of the collector, especially if he is trying to write on authors still alive," and he cited Vernon Lee and George Moore as authors whom scholars could not study without the work of collectors.[56] As Starrett would assure his *Post* readers, "Greater than the professional critics are the unprofessional collectors, and of more importance to the art of literature."[57]

[55] Starrett, "ABC of First Editions," 84.
[56] Esher, introduction to *Ten Contemporaries*, 11.
[57] Starrett, "ABC of First Editions," 84.

Trend and Trade:

Authors, Booksellers, Publishers, and the Modern Firsts Market

In January 1924, the *Fortnightly Review* carried an article that echoed nearly sentiment for sentiment one it had published thirty years earlier, William Roberts's "First Edition Mania." "The Cost of Books," by E. Beresford Chancellor—prolific author of the six-volume series *The Lives of the Rakes* and several books on London's history—took up the subject of collecting modern first editions, which experienced a major resurgence during the 1920s, as we saw in chapter 3. Like Roberts's article, "The Cost of Books" denounced the collecting of modern firsts as a silly fad perpetuated by poor judges of literary worth. According to Chancellor, unlike books with typographical or artistic features,

> the books for which great prices, rivaling those paid for such things, are asked can be said to be neither rich nor rare (setting aside their literary merit); they are, indeed, from a typographical point of view, generally of very mediocre character. In fact, they are the ordinary old four-and-sixpenny novel, to which, for some recondite reason, a value has been assigned out of all proportion, it would seem, to their intrinsic worth.... This thing has grown to such a proportion that it may almost be regarded as a craze, not dissimilar from the tulipomania which once raged in Europe, and even bearing some slight analogy to those many 'schemes' with which a credulous generation was fed in the eighteenth century.

Indeed, for Chancellor, the values to which modern books had risen were not only irrational; they were also harmful. As he wondered, "What effect have these inflated prices on the author (for even an author must sometimes be considered), the publisher, and the regular book-seller—the purveyor to the public of a book in its first-hand condition? Personally, I think a bad one," he sniffed.[1]

Chancellor's question is an intriguing one. Collectors' newfound interest in modern first editions raised issues that authors, booksellers, and publishers had never faced before. Yet his answer, which concentrates on the negative economic consequences of rising values for modern firsts—the costs of the costs, as it were—fails to consider how these groups responded to the modern firsts trend. The impact of collecting modern firsts extended beyond the world of collecting and influenced the ways authors, booksellers, and publishers operated. At the same time that these groups were influenced by the collecting of modern firsts, however, they were also shaping the field.

Undertakers, Fools, and the Ghoulishness of Being Collected

In "The Cost of Books," Chancellor makes the case that opposing economic desires motivate collectors of first editions and authors. The same sentiment would later lead the popular English essayist E. V. Lucas to label the objectives of book collectors and authors as "opposite as the objectives of undertakers and obstetricians": like the undertaker making his living from deaths, the book collector profits from scarcity, whereas the author, like the obstetrician profiting

[1] Chancellor, "Cost of Books," 173.

from births, "rejoices in huge first editions."[2] Similarly, while the modern firsts collector valued the first edition of a work, the author benefitted from the need for multiple editions—or multiple impressions of a single edition. As W. B. Yeats reportedly told a collector upon learning how much he had paid for a first edition of *The Celtic Twilight*, "I'd much rather hear you say you'd bought the last edition."[3]

This desire—for buyers to purchase new rather than older editions—points to what was certainly most irksome to authors about being collected: the purchase of first editions secondhand did not financially benefit their authors. Furthermore, authors watched their first editions sell in the collectors' market at values exponentially higher than their published prices. A. E. Coppard was one of these authors; his first book, *Adam and Eve and Pinch Me*, which sold on publication in 1921 for up to 6*s* a copy and earned him very little money, was being offered by 1930 for £12 10*s*—that is, more than forty times its publication price just nine years later.[4] Although Coppard denied rumors that he was at "dreadful odds" with first edition collectors, claiming to collect a little here and there himself, he nonetheless called it "lacerating" to see his books sold to collectors at prices so far beyond their publication values, and he complained about watching books that had gained him little bring high prices in the

[2] Qtd. in Currie, *Fishers of Books*, 27.
[3] Qtd. in King, "The Poor Collector and His Problems," 622. Yeats probably meant *impression* rather than *edition*. See the Introduction for more on the common misuse of these terms.
[4] *Adam and Eve and Pinch Me* was published by the Golden Cockerel Press in an edition of 500: 360 in orange boards at 4*s* 6*d* and 140 in canvas on white buckram at 6*s*. In its Catalogue 31 (Apr. 1930), Elkin Mathews offered a copy of the book, described only as a "limited edition," for £12 10*s*.

collectors' market, particularly when he had signed the books.[5] Coppard was not alone in his frustrations over the prices paid for autographed copies: Thomas Hardy was one of many authors to stop autographing first editions because it annoyed him to see these autographed copies selling at inflated prices. (When Yeats asked him what he did with the volumes sent to him for his autograph, Hardy led Yeats upstairs to reveal piles of books stacked to the ceiling.)[6] Of course, Coppard also was not alone in witnessing others profiting from the collecting of his first editions, regardless of autographs, and, furthermore, his case was far from extreme. He could have been like Robert Browning, who actually lost money on *Pauline*—money he had to borrow to pay for its publication—only to watch the little pamphlet sell for as high a price as £22 2*s* during his lifetime. The purchaser of that £22 2*s* pamphlet, our old friend Thomas J. Wise, upon telling Browning how much he had paid for the work, received the tart response, "Thanks, unwise Wise."[7]

Against these incredible price advances, claims that the collecting of modern firsts could financially benefit authors tend to sound feeble. Still, collectors insisted that being collected could be good for an author's pocketbook. The English bibliographer A. W. Pollard made the plausible argument in his

---

[5] Coppard, *Writings of Alfred Edgar Coppard*, 7, 6; Smith, "A. E. Coppard," 58, 66.
[6] Sutherland, *Literary Anecdotes*, 281, as cited in Waller, *Writers, Readers, Reputations*, 381. Hardy did not like that the signed first editions were being sold for a profit, but he also took issue with the attention paid to first editions of his works, "the later editions being more correct, some of the early editions not having been read by me in proof" (qtd. in Spencer, *Forty Years in My Bookshop*, 239).
Where Hardy did not respond to his autograph seekers, Norman Douglas took a more vindictive approach: not only did he refuse these requests, but he also reprinted a sampling of the more ridiculous ones in his autobiography for the purpose of mocking them. See Douglas, *Looking Back*, 408-12.
[7] Partington, *Forging Ahead*, 25. For Wise's account of purchasing *Pauline*, see *Forging Ahead*, 180.

Books in the House that collecting early works by a little known author upon publication was a means of investing in that author's future. "To buy the first editions of modern authors after they have made their reputations is an agreeable by-way of book-collecting," he offered. "To have bought them when the reputations were still to make would have given us a share, however small, in the delight of their success."[8] Seemingly less tenable, however, were claims that the heavy media attention to high prices paid for early firsts by a modern author could stimulate new sales for that author. One 1927 collecting handbook, for instance, speculated that "auction records may turn an obscure author in his latter days into a best-seller," while John Winterich imagined in *Publishers' Weekly* that reports of soaring auction records could remind potential buyers of titles they might like to own, regardless of edition.[9]

While such sales results of the modern firsts trend are difficult to show, a clearer financial opportunity for authors lay in selling their manuscripts, a practice that grew alongside the collecting of modern firsts. Among the earliest authors to sell manuscripts was Joseph Conrad, who was first approached by John Quinn, the New York collector, in August 1911 with the idea that his manuscripts held monetary value. His initial sale to Quinn included the manuscripts for one of his earliest works and his most recent—*An Outcast of the Islands* (1895) and the novella *Freya of the Seven Isles* (1911)—and, in appreciation for the supplementary income Quinn provided him, Conrad threw in a gift, the manuscript of the suppressed preface to *The Nigger of the* '*Narcissus*.'

[8] Pollard, *Books in the House*, 13.
[9] Sawyer and Darton, *English Books, 1475-1900*, 335; Winterich, "Good Second-Hand Condition," 803.

Conrad undoubtedly was pleased with the arrangement: by the end of 1912, he had sold to Quinn nearly every manuscript he had written to that point, occasionally including additional short manuscripts in appreciation for what he considered Quinn's generosity, and agreed that Quinn would have first refusal on the sale of his future works. By the end of the 1910s, Conrad's sales netted him over £2,000, with each manuscript selling to Quinn at 40 to 150 pounds. (Conrad's relationship with Quinn, which had grown from a business arrangement to a friendship, was irreparably damaged after Conrad broke his promise to give Quinn first refusal by selling to Wise, that indefatigable troublemaker of the book world.)[10]

If Quinn's payments seem small today, Conrad did not appear to consider them so, even hoping when it came to the price he had set for one of his manuscripts that Quinn did not think he had "fallen upon a shark."[11] And if Quinn's 1923 sale of his Conrad manuscripts for more than $100,000 might be seen as profiteering, Conrad offered a more sanguine perspective in letters to friends following the sale, expressing a mixture of amusement and honor over the high prices paid for his manuscripts. As he wrote to F. N. Doubleday upon seeing the list of prices published in *The Times*, "It is a wonderful adventure to happen to a still-living (or at any rate half-alive) author. The reverberation in the press here was very great indeed; and the result is that lots of people, who never heard of me before, now know my name, and thousands of others, who could not have read through a page of mine without falling into convulsions, are proclaiming me

[10] The most thorough account of Conrad's relationship with Quinn is found in Reid, *The Man from New York*. I have relied on Reid for my information about the dealings between the two.
[11] Conrad to Quinn, 3 Nov. [?] 1911, qtd. in Reid, 113.

a very great author."[12] Conrad thus focused not on the profit Quinn had made but on how the sale served to advertise his works. Furthermore, if Conrad saw his increased celebrity as benefitting his publication sales, one can imagine he would have concurred with the notion that high prices paid by collectors could financially benefit authors.

Conrad's wife Jessie agreed that the sale was to Conrad's benefit. But while Conrad saw the prices as a boost to his celebrity, Jessie's perspective subtly reshapes the argument that collectors could benefit authors by suggesting that the prices reflected Conrad's literary reputation. Writing to Quinn following the sale, she explained, "Such prices are certainly a great compliment to an author and I believe nothing approaching it has ever happened during the life time of any writer before." The implication that sale prices were a barometer of literary worth was precisely what roiled many about book collecting and particularly the collecting of modern authors. Yet for Jessie—who was correct in her belief that the sale of Conrad's manuscripts reached unprecedented values for a living author—the barometer was accurate in this instance. Still, even while Jessie made the case that the sale worked to her husband's advantage, and even while her note to Quinn—with whom she had maintained a correspondence in spite of the Wise incident—was generally cordial, one can't help but read in her opening words to Quinn a touch of resentment: "You must be feeling quite satisfied with the great success of your sale of Conrad's Manuscripts."[13] The confirmation of an

[12] Conrad to Doubleday, 20 Nov. 1923, qtd. in Reid, 604-05.
[13] Conrad to Quinn, 18. Nov. 1923, qtd. in Reid, 605.

author's reputation was one thing; the 900 percent return on his manuscripts was another.

The authors who might have been counted on to show appreciation for the collecting of modern authors were those who collected books themselves. These were author-collectors who collected broadly in several periods and genres, such as Hardy, George Gissing, Andrew Lang, and A. C. Swinburne. And there were author-collectors who included modern authors in their collecting concentrations, among them John Drinkwater, Amy Lowell, George Barr McCutcheon, Hugh Walpole, and Carolyn Wells. For Swinburne, who considered himself "indifferent" to modern firsts, his love of books could still make him sympathetic to the actions that other collectors might take to obtain the items they desired—even when those items were his own early works. When Wise wrote in 1888 to Swinburne to tell him of acquiring the first edition of his early poem *Cleopatra*, an 1866 pamphlet that the poet didn't even recall, Swinburne admitted to Wise that "if I were not a bit of a bibliomaniac myself, I should be shocked to think of your wasting good money on such a trumpery ephemeral."[14] (In fact, as it turned out, Wise hadn't wasted the seven guineas he claimed to have spent on the pamphlet, and there was a good reason Swinburne didn't recall the "trumpery ephemeral": the pamphlet was a Wise creation, and his letter to Swinburne was an attempt to get the poet to authenticate it.) However, even Swinburne's bibliophilic sympathies had their limits, particularly when it came to Wise's pestering him about his early works, and he abruptly ended another

[14] Swinburne, *Letters of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, 2:193 [Swinburne to Wise, 2 May 1888], 2:188 [Swinburne to Wise, 25 Apr. 1888].

conversation about a *Siena* pamphlet (again, a forgery) by snapping at Wise, "I know nothing whatever about the cut or uncut edges [of the pamphlet]—and care, I may add, considerably less than nothing; except inasmuch as I hope your copy may be 'all right,' on your account."[15] Unsurprisingly, Wise neglected to include this retort in the two-volume collection of Swinburne's letters he edited with Edmund Gosse.

Other author-collectors showed substantially less compassion for their fellow collectors. Lang, for one, collected broadly in old books, and he acknowledged that works by certain modern authors such as Tennyson and Matthew Arnold might be collected as "things of curious interest."[16] However, in general he was suspicious of collectors of modern first editions, cautioning an *Illustrated London News* audience that the "mania for first editions is carried too far" by those who collect modern books and thus is "foolish even for a mania." Although he could understand collectors' devotion to earlier first editions, the idea that modern editions could hold any value vexed him. "What on earth does it matter," he huffed, "whether Mr Hotten's or Mr Moxon's name is on the title-page of a volume of Mr Swinburne's?" (Lang's description of his own copy of the book, *The Queen Mother*—with "at least two if not three" paper labels on the spine and Hotten's on the top—revealed that he owned the third issue.) Had he been writing of Shakespeare, Milton, Sterne, or another writer whose first editions he cited as appropriate to collect, these details might have held some meaning. But to Lang, when it came to bibliographic differences in Swinburne's

[15] Swinburne, *Swinburne Letters*, 5:239 [Swinburne to Wise, ca. 4 May 1888?]. Curiously, though, Wise did include the letter in his 1925 *Swinburne Library* and in volume 5 of *The Ashley Library*.
[16] Lang, *Letters on Literature*, 121.

work, they were irrelevant because "the 'Queen Mother' is just the same poem for all that."[17]

Where Lang couldn't accept modern first editions as collectible, the poet and mystery writer Carolyn Wells, who began her collection by focusing on modern authors, found it difficult to reconcile her roles as an author and as a collector of her peers. In a humorous, self-deprecating retrospective of her collecting career, Wells jokes about the silliness of her initial motivation to collect—"'Collect books,' I said to myself. 'You're by way of being literary—make a literary collection'"—and of the superficiality behind her collecting choices, but what truly mortifies her is remembering her early habit of using her connections to her literary peers to obtain inscribed copies of modern first editions. If other collectors saw their ability to collect inscribed copies as triumphs, Wells later reflected on her actions in embarrassment, claiming to "have the grace to be thoroughly ashamed of such proceedings." And while she still looked on some of these books in fondness, she was chagrined enough by her collecting to have "long since mended that error of my ways," concentrating her collecting on works by Walt Whitman.[18] For Wells, collecting the works of her peers had uncomfortably blurred the boundary between fellow author and fannish collector.

Indeed, while issues of financial gain may have caused tensions between authors and collectors, a familiar argument about rationality also crept into discussions about what divided the two groups. Of course, collectors had long proudly proclaimed their own cases of bibliomania. But from the mouths of

[17] Lang, "First Edition Mania." For Lang on first editions, also see *The Library*, 2nd ed., xiii-xiv, 112-13.
[18] Wells, "On Finishing Collector," 629.

authors, the diagnosis had a decidedly more derogatory ring. "Golly! What fools collectors are!!," Kipling exclaimed to a friend upon learning how much his works had realized at a 1921 sale. [19] Indeed, "foolish" was a common epithet for collectors, sounded perhaps most loudly by George Bernard Shaw, who was not only a frequent object of collectors' desires but also personally acquainted with many collectors through his involvement in several literary societies.[20] As the collector Barton Currie summarized, Shaw was "brutally frank in expressing his opinion that book collectors taken *en masse* are a harmless lot of morons bitten by an inferiority complex."[21] To Shaw, collectors were "foolish" for preferring "first editions full of mistakes to final corrected editions," and he echoed the common claim that collectors did not actually read the books they collected.[22] E. V. Lucas, who compared authors and collectors to obstetricians and undertakers, similarly focused on the notion that collectors were irrational. For any of Lucas's readers who may have missed the negative connotations of associating book collectors with undertakers, Lucas went on to make his feelings plain: "As I diagnose book collectors and authors," he concluded, "I regard the author as a far more sane and worthy type. He is a creator and a practical man. The book

---

[19] Kipling, *Letters* 4:69 [Kipling to Feilden, 9 Apr. 1921]. The collection sold was that of Captain E. W. Martindell, who published a 1922 bibliography of Kipling. The sale, which was strong in early Kipling items, realized £2,151. See *Letters*, 4:71, n.10.
[20] Among his participation in literary societies, Shaw was a member of the New Shakspere, Shelley, and Browning Societies, the last of which he claimed to have been "elected to by mistake, though [he] stood by the mistake willingly enough" (Shaw, *Bernard Shaw's Book Reviews*, 244).
[21] Currie, *Fishers of Books*, 27.
[22] Shaw, Appendix to *Thomas J. Wise in the Original Cloth*, 319; Carter, *Taste and Technique*, 39. Another author to denounce collectors was A. E. Housman, who recognized that a printer's punctuation error in "The half-moon westers low, my love" in his *Last Poems* would likely enhance its value to "bibliophiles, an idiotic class." See Housman to Richards, 14 Oct. 1922, in Housman, *Letters*, 515.

collector preserves and hoards and rakes through rubbish heaps."[23] In the end, then, Lucas drops the analogy warranted on monetary gain and chalks up the differences between collectors and authors to a measure of reason.

Aiding arguments such as Lucas's was the fact that modern firsts collectors privileged an author's earliest works, citing, as we have seen in chapter 1, everything from scholarly to spiritual to financial value in these nascent productions. As such, collectors revived works that embarrassed authors later in their careers, works that they believed lacked literary value and preferred to consign to the rubbish heap. Browning's displeasure on learning that Wise had acquired a first edition of *Pauline*—the work so embarrassing to the poet that he had reportedly destroyed its many unsold copies—likely stemmed not only from the amount Wise spent but also from the very fact that the little pamphlet still existed. A similar perspective was offered by W. H. Hudson, who told the collector Paul Lemperly he was pleased to know that the first edition of his *A Crystal Age* was scarce and "should be glad to have it out of existence." For Hudson, who had published the first edition anonymously, the book was a "poor thing," and he made significant revisions to the 1906 second edition, eliminating what he called "one or two of the most glaring absurdities" found in the first edition. "I have succeeded in recovering a few copies" of the first edition, Hudson boasted to Lemperly, "for the pleasure of destroying them."[24] Charles Dickens, who was collected early on by Frederick Locker-Lampson, threatened even more ruinous measures to prevent the recovery of his early works. Asked by Locker-

[23] Qtd. in Currie, *Fishers of Books*, 27.
[24] Qtd. in Lemperly, *Among My Books*, 21.

Lampson whether he owned a copy of *The Village Coquettes*, Dickens declared, "No; and if I knew it was in my house, and I could not get rid of it in any other way, I would burn the wing of the house where it was!"[25]

While some authors had thus attempted to kill off their early creations, disavowing their literary worth, collectors sought to protect the existence of what they cherished as treasures, and especially those that, thanks to their maker's subsequent mortification, had become rare. Accordingly, collectors might be celebrated for preserving works that otherwise would not exist today. And yet this tension between the desires of authors and collectors led Vincent Starrett, himself a collector, to identify something macabre in seeking out these early works:

> Queer indeed are the items that come to light out of the box and barrow, long lost and perhaps forgotten even by their authors; early pamphlets, printed at the author's expense, unimportant volumes with great names signed to the introductory prefaces, advertising brochures done by celebrities in their cheese-and-ale days, circulars, playbills, programs, and what not! It is almost wicked to turn them up, but the implacable collector must possess every line printed by the man he has chosen to collect. Perhaps some day a law will be passed against the ghoulishness of it all; in the meantime it is often these very trifles and embarrassments that bring the largest prices in the market.[26]

[25] Dickens, *Letters*, 12:374 [Dickens to Locker-Lampson, circa June 1869].
[26] Starrett, "Diamond in the Dust Heap," 70.

To be sure, Starrett is vague on the connection between the collector's innate compulsion to collect early works and the fact that these works are often valuable. What is apparent, however, is his sense that there is something wrong—something "almost wicked," something "ghoulish"—about such an activity, recalling Lucas's association between collectors and undertakers. In fact, while Lucas initially casts collectors as undertakers, the collectors in his later descriptions, who "preserve, and hoard and rake through rubbish heaps," sound more like grave-robbers, attempting to dig up the remains of the dead. If authors had long since come to terms with the short lives of their early works, collectors were like so many Frankensteins, resurrecting creations that their own makers preferred to keep buried. And if this weren't morbid enough, there was also the sense, identified by Browning, that being collected was like being consigned to the grave before one's time. Learning that the Browning Society was compiling a bibliography of his works, he lamented that it made him feel "as if I were dead and *begun* with, after half a century."[27] Prior to Browning and his peers, the authors who were "begun with"—the authors who necessitated bibliographies, the authors who were collected—were indeed long deceased. The collecting of modern first editions uncomfortably placed living authors in a position formerly reserved for the dead, enshrining them before their time had come.

In the end though, perhaps the most gruesome aspect for authors of being collected was the knowledge that prices for one's books would rise upon one's death. As if to emphasize this connection between death and increased value, the January 1895 issue of the *Bookman* immediately followed a mournful account of

[27] Browning, qtd. in Ryals, *Life of Robert Browning*, 217, emphasis original.

Robert Louis Stevenson's last living moments with the observation that "there is sure to be a great rise in Stevenson first editions; and the rare pamphlets are certain to rise to unattainable figures in spite of the fact that they are likely to be included in the Edinburgh edition."[28] More than thirty years later, following Hardy's death, Frederick M. Hopkins devoted his usual *Publishers' Weekly* column on rare books to a "Checklist of the Works of Thomas Hardy." The checklist was spurred by Hopkins's sense that Hardy's death and the subsequent tributes to his literary greatness in the press would boost his popularity with collectors.[29] The dubious distinction of having one's price rise in the collectors' market upon death extended as well to lesser literary celebrities: a charming tribute in *Publishers' Weekly* to the Canadian poet Bliss Carman upon his death, reflecting on his "love of beauty and the belief that joy is an essential element of true living," began with the blunt observation that his death "will create an immediate demand for his first editions and manuscripts."[30]

Selling Firsts

The collecting of modern firsts may not have caused booksellers to reflect upon their own mortality. But like authors, those who sold new books were keenly aware of being shut out of the collectors' market. Unless collectors sought out first editions at the time of publication, or unless attention to high-value sales actually led regular buyers to purchase later editions, booksellers would not benefit from the collecting of modern firsts. As the trend boomed, some

[28] "News Notes", *Bookman*, Jan. 1895, 104.
[29] Hopkins, "Field of Old and Rare Books," 292-93.
[30] Hopkins, "Old and Rare Books," 2879.

booksellers were not content to sit idly by and hope for such effects. Instead, these booksellers actively sought to tap into of the popularity of modern firsts collecting to increase their sales.

One possible way for booksellers to take advantage of the modern firsts trend was to promote collecting among regular buyers. This was the lesson offered by "Fostering Collectors," part of the Old Bookseller and Junior Clerk series of dialectical articles on various aspects of successful bookselling that appeared throughout 1927 in *Publishers' Weekly*. "Fostering Collectors" suggested that engaging customers in the activity of collecting offered a financial opportunity by encouraging more sales, but the article also provided arguments about why collecting could be lucrative for those customers. As such, the Junior Clerk's point that persuading a buyer to become a collector "is a fine way to get them to spend money with you" is met by the Old Bookseller's defense that it "is also a good way to make a nice profit for the collector." The Old Bookseller goes on to offer the dubious contention that "hardly ever does a book decrease in value when a part of a real collection," before proposing the familiar argument that "the first edition of ten years ago may be worth several times as much today," and he reminds readers that "there are plenty of ways in which the average person of modest income can become a collector; not all collections necessarily mean the expenditure of great amounts of money."[31] "Fostering Collectors" thus not only elucidated the financial benefits of turning customers on to collecting, but it also, through the arguments voiced by the Old Bookseller, provided booksellers with

[31] Claudy, "Fostering Collectors," 199.

talking points they could adopt to turn the ordinary customer into the more profitable customer-collector.

A more arduous but potentially more remunerative route into the collectors' market was to devote a section of one's shop to rare books, a line of advice offered by the Chicago bookseller Morris Briggs in his 1927 series of essays, *Buying and Selling Rare Books*, which also appeared that year in *Publishers' Weekly*. In particular, Briggs recommended Americana or first editions as "two great fields of rare books that should be taken up by the average small booksellers," and in fact, according to a preface to Briggs's essays appearing in *Publishers' Weekly*, the creation of a rare books section devoted to first editions was practically a natural outgrowth of one's regular business. "The rare book department may be thought of as a service department or may be confined to first editions, which the small bookstore is bound to carry anyway," the preface pointed out, "but these can be sold in the most profitable way, if the bookseller organizes a small but efficient rare book department."[32] Briggs rested his argument for the advantages of selling modern firsts on the notion that new first editions were bound to increase in financial value, a point he reiterated throughout the essays. As he contended in one instance, the advantages of investing in the sale of first editions were clear because a "pleasant fact about new books is that they change into rare books almost over-night, and the bookseller who is not familiar with the rare book situation will miss out many times on a legitimate profit that could easily have been his." In Briggs's estimation, to ignore such an obvious opportunity would be foolish. "If the President of General

[32] Briggs, *Buying and Selling Rare Books*, 25; "Rare Book Department," 395.

Motors Company went into the book business," he prodded readers, "do you imagine that he would ignore rare books?"[33]

By 1927, when Briggs offered his advice to regular booksellers, dozens of rare booksellers had already begun focusing on modern first editions. Among the earliest of these in England were John and Edward Bumpus; Bertram Dobell; Charles Elkin Mathews and John Lane; Charles, Frederick, and William Hutt; Pickering & Chatto; Walter T. Spencer; and James and Mary Lee Tregaskis, all of whom included modern firsts among their stock by the mid-1890s. In the US, the New York dealers Leon & Brothers were promoting the collecting of American first editions as early as 1885, and their *Catalogue of First Editions of American Authors* from that year was far ahead of its time, with very few American booksellers initially following their lead of dealing in modern firsts—whether American or English. The few exceptions included W. E. Benjamin in New York, P. K. Foley in Boston, and Walter M. Hill in Chicago, who were selling modern firsts by the end of the 1890s. As the collecting of modern firsts increased in popularity, however, so too did the number of sellers specializing in the field. By the 1920s, American dealers in modern firsts ranged from such larger firms as Scribner's and Dodd, Mead to smaller shops, including the Phoenix Book Shop, James F. Drake, and Harry Stone in New York, and the Chicago-based Argus Bookshop.

In London, the 1920s saw the start of a major figure in the modern firsts trade, Bertram Rota. Angus O'Neill has detailed in one of the few considerations of the origins of the modern firsts trade how Bertram Rota, grandson of Bertram

[33] Briggs, *Buying and Selling Rare Books*, 5, 9.

Dobell, was pioneering in the sale of modern firsts editions, in part through his keen eye for lasting literary and financial value. Rota's first catalogue, *A Catalogue of Modern Books, Mainly First Editions* (1923), evidences this foresight: while the catalogue includes books commonly sought by modern first collectors of the period—by such authors as John Galsworthy, John Masefield and Hugh Walpole—it also featured authors that have better withstood the test of time in today's collectors market including Ezra Pound and Virginia Woolf.[34] Rota did not narrow in on the high spots of collecting, and he avoided inflated prices. Instead, according to Simon Nowell-Smith in a memorial essay upon Rota's death, "He built up his reputation, especially among young collectors, by selling at moderate prices clean copies of a wide range of modern books, many of them little known at the time."[35] Furthermore, Rota's thorough and scholarly catalogue descriptions imbued the modern firsts field with new level of respectability. Evidence of this is on display throughout Rota's catalogues of the 1930s, where entries increasingly include not only copy-specific notes about items for sale, typical in sellers' catalogues, but also information about the publication histories of items. Such is the case in a lengthy 1935 entry for *The Humboldt Library of Science*, No. 147—an 1891 publication featuring Oscar Wilde's "The Soul of Man Under Socialism"—which details the publication history of Wilde's essay and notes that the item is unrecorded in Stuart Mason's exhaustive Wilde bibliography.[36] Rota was also likely the first successful dealer

[34] See O'Neill, "Patterns of Collecting and Trading in 'Modern' Literature," 228-30.
[35] Nowell-Smith, qtd. in Rota, "Bertram Rota," 285.
[36] Bertram Rota Ltd., Cat. 38 (1935), 31. Rota's son Anthony has also pointed to a 1938 Rota catalogue entry for Kipling's *Pan in Vermont* as "indicative of the quiet way in which Rota aired his learning"; in the entry, Rota describes in a long paragraph the poem's publication history,

to recognize the importance of dust jackets, a standard among collectors and bibliographers today. Given his influence on the modern firsts field, it is entirely appropriate, as O'Neill notes, that the *Oxford English Dictionary* should cite a Bertram Rota catalogue as a printed authority for use of the term "modern first edition."[37]

Rota's business illustrates the positive influence booksellers could have on the field of modern editions collecting, and similar examples are to be found in the histories of other firms—including Walter M. Hill, Elkin Mathews, James F. Drake, and Frank Hollings—which helped to shape the collecting of modern firsts into an established and respected field. However, as the modern firsts trend boomed during the 1890s and swelled to unsustainable heights in the late 1920s, many focused on the negative influence of booksellers. If collectors of modern firsts were criticized as privileging works without recognized literary value, booksellers were charged with creating the market for these books. In his 1894 invective against modern firsts, William Roberts blamed the "artful machinations of a few of the trade" for driving the prevailing demand.[38] Thirty years later, E. Beresford Chancellor's "Cost of Books" would make the same argument, contending that the modern firsts trend was largely an "organised attempt to create a market for contemporary works at top prices." Furthermore, according to Beresford, booksellers had created this artificial market by purchasing large

---

explaining the reasons for the separate 1902 and 1903 editions and detailing the differences between the two (Rota, "Bertram Rota," 286).

[37] O'Neill, "Patterns," 228-29. To illustrate the term "modern firsts," the OED quotes from another seller who specialized in modern firsts and whose business developed during the 1920s, George McLeish. The son of Charles McLeish, a binder who had worked under T. J. Cobden Sanderson at the Doves Bindery, George McLeish ran McLeish & Sons with his brother Charles until the late 1950s. See "Note on Charles and George McLeish," *The Book Collector* (1958), 11-12.

[38] Roberts, "First Edition Mania," 347.

quantities of first editions upon their publication and then releasing them slowly and at higher prices. There were, he claimed, "certain writers whose works are hardly cold from the press, and piles of which may still be seen on the counters of their publishers and first-hand booksellers, before they appear under greatly enhanced prices in the catalogues of the second-hand purveyors of literature." He cited a case in which a first edition in a second-hand shop was being sold for more than it was at the same time from a "first-hand" bookseller. "In a word," Beresford summarized, "the second-hand bookseller was charging a large percentage of profit on an article still obtainable at first hand at its original published price."[39]

Such reports were far from the collector's dream of coming across the bookseller who did not realize the treasure held in his stock—a dream that fuelled articles like Vincent Starrett's 1927 "Diamond in the Dust Heap," about the possibilities of fantastic finds in second-hand shops, and reports like the one offered the same year in *Outlook* that recently an "innocent collector picked out of a pile of pamphlets in a Brooklyn shop the fourth known copy of Poe's *Tamerlane*, and for a few cents became the possessor of a treasure which he disposed of a fortnight later, according to newspaper reports, to the tune of $15,000." As the article pointed out, "despite the growing knowledge of booksellers, the chances of an unexpected 'find' has [*sic*] not altogether disappeared."[40] Yet these stories were matched by claims of booksellers' cunning. In addition to reports that booksellers were creating a false sense of

[39] Chancellor, "Cost of Books," 172, 170.
[40] Cannon, "Price of Books," 256.

scarcity were accusations that booksellers were to blame for inflating the values of modern firsts. Even the *Economic Survey of the Book Industry, 1930-1931* cited the "fad for 'English firsts'" as having been "cultivated so assiduously by some booksellers."[41] John Carter, later reflecting on the period and the astronomical heights to which prices had risen, argued that booksellers, "whose general, if not special, experience should have warned them of these dangers," were not "sufficiently resolute to deny their impetuous customers or put a curb on sky-rocketing prices."[42] Carter may have dismissed the majority of modern firsts collectors as thoughtless followers of fashion—as described in the previous chapter—but to his mind, booksellers should have known better.

While it is difficult to look back on the modern firsts booms of the 1890s and 1920s and judge just who should have known what, what is more apparent is the probability that booksellers did buy stocks of first editions upon publication and sold them at inflated prices soon after. In fact, Briggs plainly made this recommendation to booksellers looking for entry into the rare books market. "After the bookseller has obtained a knowledge of first edition values," Briggs suggested, "he may put it to use at once in making his purchase of new books by authors whose past work has been collected. In the case of such living authors as Cabell, Hergesheimer, Morley, Millay, Frost, Robinson, Mencken, Sandburg and many others, it is well to reserve a few copies of their current first editions for the rare book department," he advised. "Within a few weeks or months the first edition will bring a considerable premium; especially since copies are in mint

[41] Cheney, *Economic Survey of the Book Industry, 1930-1931*, 108.
[42] Carter, *Taste and Technique*, 40.

condition."[43] From Briggs's standpoint, these were the actions of a savvy businessman, one who responded to the demands of the market.

Publishers reading Briggs's essay likely would have bristled at his advice that booksellers reserve extra copies of first editions to sell at a premium when the books increased in demand. In certain cases, however, where intimate links existed between publishers and booksellers, the interest in modern firsts could provide an attractive sales opportunity. In fact, Angus O'Neill has claimed that the early market for modern firsts was motivated by the "synergy" between two firms, the publisher Chatto & Windus and the bookseller Pickering & Chatto.[44] Although any notions about an arrangement between the firms regarding the sale of modern firsts are speculative, O'Neill correctly points out that Robert Louis Stevenson, a Chatto & Windus author, was a fixture in Pickering & Chatto catalogues during the early 1890s—as was Swinburne, another Chatto & Windus author. O'Neill notes that an 1892 Pickering & Chatto catalogue included Stevenson's *Across the Plains*, a Chatto & Windus title published that year.[45] In this and similar instances, Pickering & Chatto offered the titles at their published prices of 6s.[46] But examining Pickering & Chatto catalogues from the early 1890s reveals that slightly older Chatto & Windus titles from Stevenson and Swinburne

---

[43] Briggs, *Buying and Selling Rare Books*, 25.
[44] O'Neill, "Patterns," 227. Chatto & Windus and Pickering & Chatto are linked by Andrew (Dan) Chatto. Chatto had worked for John Camden Hotten, and upon Hotten's death in 1873, Chatto purchased the business and set up Chatto & Windus with W. E. Windus. In 1878, Chatto purchased the bookselling firm founded by William Pickering and renamed the business Pickering & Chatto. Chatto's sons further connected the firms: Andrew Chatto Jr. was a nominal partner in Chatto & Windus, while Tom Chatto joined Pickering & Chatto in the 1890s. See Warner, *Chatto and Windus*; Weedon, "Chatto, Andrew"; and Rees-Mogg, *Memoirs*, 278.
[45] O'Neill, "Patterns," 227.
[46] See, for example, *Catalogue of Old & Rare Books … for Sale by Pickering and Chatto* (1894), which included two Stevenson titles published by Chatto & Windus just the previous year, *Catriona* and *Island Night's Entertainments*.

saw large price increases when they appeared a few years later in the bookseller's catalogues. An uncut copy of Swinburne's *Study in Shakespeare*, published at 8*s*, was offered for £1 5*s* in Pickering & Chatto's 1894 catalogue, for instance, while their 1896 catalogue listed a "spotless as new" copy of Stevenson's *The Merry Men* for 15*s*, up from its publication price of 6*s* and one of a few Chatto & Windus Stevenson titles described as "spotless as new."[47] Did Pickering and Chatto's good fortune in securing these practically new copies have anything to do with their close ties to the publisher of these works?

Creating a Sensation: Elkin Mathews and the Modern Firsts Trade

If the "synergy" between Chatto & Windus and Pickering & Chatto suggests that the answer to this question is yes, the firm of Elkin Mathews presents an even clearer connection between publisher and bookseller. Charles Elkin Mathews has been recognized, most notably by James G. Nelson, for his influence in shaping modern British literature by supporting innovative young authors. As Nelson aptly characterizes Mathews, he was "unique [in] the role he played in encouraging new poets at a time when the various currents leading to modern literature were beginning to flow." A list of his important publications—produced first with John Lane and later on his own—resembles what Nelson terms a "roll call of books crucial to the rise of modern literature"; among these are Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, W. B. Yeats's *Wind Among the Reeds*, James Joyce's *Chamber Music*, and Ezra Pound's *Lustra*.[48] Additionally, Mathews is well known for his

[47] Pickering & Chatto, *Catalogue of Old & Rare Books*, 1894, 1896.
[48] Nelson, *Elkin Mathews*, 3. In addition to Nelson's *Elkin Mathews*, studies of Charles Elkin Mathews's publishing work include Nelson's *The Early Nineties* (1971), Hutchins's "Elkin

consideration to elegant design, illustration, and format in the production of his books. However, what has been less explored is the significant influence of Mathews and the firms he founded on the modern firsts trade, an influence wielded not only through the firms' publishing ventures but also through their bookselling activities. Mathews once remarked that he hated bookkeeping, and indeed there exists very little in the way of business records for his firm's early years, but correspondence, catalogues, and some later business records begin to reveal how the Elkin Mathews firms both were shaped by and shaped the modern firsts trade.[49]

Mathews began his career working in antiquarian bookshops in London and Bath. Between 1884 and 1885, using money borrowed from an uncle and books he had been acquiring on his own, he opened his first bookshop, in Exeter. "You will see that I am prepared to turn my most cherished possessions into cash," he wrote to his brother. "Necessity must overrule sentiment."[50] Necessity soon also forced Mathews to relocate from Exeter, which he found unable to support steady business, to London, where he set up shop under the sign of the Bodley Head on Vigo Street, in October 1887, with Lane as his silent partner. At the same time that Mathews and Lane were proceeding with their bookselling business, they were also developing their famed Bodley Head publishing venture, which began in 1889. Over the following five years, under the direction of Mathews and Lane (who became a named partner in 1892), the Bodley Head

---

Mathews, Poets' Publisher," (1970), and Stetz and Lasner's *England in the 1890s* (1990). I have relied on these sources to inform my understanding of Mathews's publishing activities.

[49] On Mathews's dislike of bookkeeping, see his draft letter to Lane, 14 Aug. 1887, Papers of Charles Elkin Mathews (PCEM).

[50] Mathews to Mathews, 26 Apr. 1885, PCEM.

became famous for fine editions of *belles letters* and for publishing the aesthetic movement's leading lights, including Wilde, Michael Field, Lionel Johnson, and Aubrey Beardsley, whose controversial *Yellow Book* led in part to the dissolution of the partnership between Mathews and Lane in September 1894.[51] Lane retained the Bodley Head name and became more recognized than Mathews in the publishing world. Yet Mathews spent the rest of his life devoted to his bookselling and publishing ventures, bringing out important works of the decadent and symbolist movements by such authors as Yeats, Joyce, Pound, and Nancy Cunard. When Mathews died in 1922, his widow sold Elkin Mathews Ltd. to A. W. Evans, who continued the firm under the Elkin Mathews name. In 1926, the firm split in two: under the directorship of H. V. Marrot, the publishing house became Elkin Mathews and Marrot, Ltd.; and the bookselling business continued as Elkin Mathews, Ltd., with the famed bookman Percy Muir serving in later years as managing director. [52]

By 1926, when the firm divided between the publishing and bookselling ventures, Elkin Mathews Ltd. had established its reputation as a leading dealer of modern firsts. Their Catalogue 1, published in 1922 and devoted to first editions of modern books, set the firm's path. In fact, Charles Elkin Mathews had established this path, as noted by the catalogue, which, while produced after Mathews's death, was nonetheless "mainly the result of his activities."[53] Over the 1920s and early 1930s, modern firsts dominated Elkin Mathews's stock, and the catalogues featured prefaces on such subjects of interest to modern firsts

[51] On the breakup between Mathews and Lane, see Nelson, *The Early Nineties*, chapter 8.
[52] The assets of Elkin Mathews and Marrot, Ltd. were sold in 1941 to George Allen & Unwin, Ltd.
[53] Elkin Mathews Ltd., Cat. 1 (1922). Mathews's own collection, which was dominated by modern works, including many presentation copies, was sold by Hodgson & Co. in Apr. 1922.

collectors as "points" in modern books, bibliographies of modern authors, and books of the 1890s.[54] Of special note is the firm's Catalogue 31 from April 1930; titled "A Catalogue of Modern First Editions," it featured a whopping 1,915 modern items for sale. The firm further catered to those interested in modern firsts by circulating to potential buyers checklists of modern authors, which were to be annotated and returned to the firm so that any new items for sale could be reported to interested buyers.[55]

Yet while the firm had become recognized for specializing in modern firsts by the 1920s, the association between Elkin Mathews and modern first editions actually stretches back as far as 1887—years before William Roberts would identify the existence of a "first edition mania" and even to the period before Mathews and Lane's shop on Vigo Street would open. During those months, the two engaged in frequent discussion about stocking the shop with modern firsts, with Lane reporting to Mathews in September 1887 of purchasing a "nice little parcel of modern books, first editions" and, on other occasions, naming particular titles he had bought for the firm, including Tennyson's *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* (Moxon, 1852) and Philip Bourke Marston's *Song Tide* (Ellis & Green, 1871) as well as such recently published titles as Lewis Carroll's *A Tangled Tale* (Macmillan, 1885) and E. Nesbit's *Lays and Legends* (Longmans, Green, 1886).[56] Lane also warned Mathews that they were "weak" in

---

[54] See "'Points' in Modern First Editions," Cat. 31 (Apr. 1930); "Points and Pseudo-Points," Cat. 39 (Oct. 1931); Bibliographies as Helps and Hinderances," Cat. 40 (Nov. 1931); "Books of the Nineties," Cat. 42 (Jan. 1932).
[55] See the pamphlet beginning, "We have for some time, developed an elaborate system of reporting First Editions of modern authors to those of our clients who collect them," circa mid-1930s, Elkin Mathews mss.
[56] Lane to Mathews, 1887 Sept. 30, 1887 Sept. 20, 1887 June 15, PCEM.

Tennyson and Keats, and he advised him to buy up first editions of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Underwood* as soon as possible, since the second edition had recently been released.[57] That Lane, in his correspondence with Mathews, appears to have prognosticated the popularity of modern firsts is also upheld by the belief he expressed in May 1887 that a catalogue of modern first editions "would create a sensation." Moreover, Lane evidently wanted their firm to be the one to create that sensation: he reports to Mathews that an associate had suggested the very same idea as a "new and good one," but Lane, ostensibly to throw his friend off the concept, was "careful not to father it" and actually "discouraged the venture."[58] Unfortunately, because only Lane's side of these conversations has been preserved, it is difficult to know how Mathews responded to such ideas, but it is clear from Lane's letters that he relied on Mathews's expertise to guide their trade in modern firsts. "Is that cheap?" he queries Mathews after informing him how much he paid for *Song Tide*—and at 6*s* 8*d*, apparently it was, for they would price the book at nearly twice that in their first catalogue.[59] In another letter, he asks Mathews how much he should be paying for first editions by R. S. Surtees.[60]

Further still, a manuscript notebook kept by Mathews and held now by The Lilly Library illustrates Mathews's active early involvement in the modern

---

[57] Lane to Mathews, 1887 Sept. 20, 1887 May, PCEM.
[58] Lane to Mathews, 1887 May 16, PCEM. Patricia Hutchins, in an early study of Mathews's publishing venture, quotes from this manuscript letter; she transcribes the name of Lane's associate as "May" and identifies him as the translator and publisher J. Lewis May, who was indeed friends with Lane. However, May was born in 1873, making him only fourteen at the time of this letter. To me, the name appears to read "Clay" and thus might be one of the members of the firm Richard Clay and Sons—possibly Charles, or his son, Charles Felix—as Lane worked with the printing firm on Bodley Head books.
[59] Lane to Mathews, 1887 June 15, PCEM.
[60] Lane to Mathews, 1887 Aug. 10, PCEM.

firsts trade. With the title "Bibliographical Wrinkles" scrawled in ink on its cover and with Mathews's Exeter address stamped inside, the tall ledger contains Mathews's various bibliographical notes on titles by more than fifty authors, the majority active in the late nineteenth century.[61] Although the notebook appears to have been kept between 1888 and 1918, the bulk of the entries date from the late 1880s to the early 1890s and concern such subjects as edition sizes, biographical details about authors, binding descriptions, and price estimates. An entry for Andrew Lang's *XXII Ballades in Blue China*, for example, reads: "12 mo. limp parchment 1880. Mr Lang tells me that the genuine first edition may be known by some alteration made in ink at a certain page." Many of the entries follow these descriptive lines and Mathews presumably used them to identify first editions, determine values, and develop catalogue descriptions. As such, "Bibliographical Wrinkles" evidences Mathews's early interest in modern first editions from authors including Robert Browning, Kate Greenaway, Norman Gale, H. Rider Haggard, and Robert Louis Stevenson. Perhaps most interesting, in an entry concerning works by Richard Jefferies, the notebook shows Mathews speculating, very early on, in the success of modern firsts in the collectors market: in this entry, dated June 1889, Mathews reports buying the entire remainder of Jefferies's *Nature Near London* (1883) from its publisher, Chatto & Windus, at the usual distributors' price.[62] Given the apparent "synergy" between Chatto & Windus and Pickering & Chatto, it is surprising that this remainder did

[61] Mathews, "Bibliographical Wrinkles," Muir mss. II.
[62] "Bibliographical Wrinkles," Muir mss. II. The entry reads: "Richard Jefferies. Nov. 30 1888.[:] I am informed today by Chatto & Windus that only two of this author's books are still in their first editions - viz. - The Open Air & Nature Near London - and the stock consists of about 300 & 100 copies respectively. June 13[:] Today I have purchased [*illegible*] Nature near London at the usual dist. price - the entire remainder."

not go from the publisher to the bookseller, and indeed Pickering & Chatto catalogues of the early 1890s do not include *Nature Near London*. Perhaps Mathews put more faith in the title's future value than Pickering & Chatto did. If this is the case, Mathews was right: within five years, after Mathews purchased the remainder stock, J. H. Slater's price guide for first editions by modern authors cited the book's value at 12*s*, double its publication price.[63]

If correspondence and private notes offer valuable insight into the firm's early purchases in modern first editions, the plainest evidence of Elkin Mathews's pioneering activity in the trade lies in their catalogues. The earliest of these, released in December 1887 and labeled a "New series of scarce and interesting books, first editions," presents a diverse lot, ranging from sporting works and seventeenth- and eighteenth-century travel narratives, to the leftover stock from Mathews's Exeter shop, which had specialized in works of regional interest. But there is also a strong representation from modern authors—including Robert Browning, Carroll, Dickens, Austin Dobson, George Eliot, Lang, Swinburne, and Tennyson—and their titles are among the catalogue's costliest. In fact, of the

[63] Nelson has also argued that Mathews's interest in selling the books of the Daniel Press was "to a marked degree speculative." Beginning in 1889, Mathews bought the Daniel Press's remaining stock and eventually secured C. H. O. Daniel's promise to supply future publications. Having done this, Mathews was "free to set whatever price on them he deemed the future market would bear," as Nelson notes. "That this was his design is borne out by the fact that the price of every title he secured from Daniel was listed in his catalogue for considerably more than Daniel himself had priced them." Nelson provides examples of these price increases, most spectacular among them Mathews's pricing of Robert Bridges's *The Growth of Love* (1890) at £2 12*s* 6*d* in 1893, up £2 from Daniel's announced price of 12*s* 6*d* in 1890. See Nelson, "The Bodley Head and the Daniel Press," 39.
Additionally, Nelson describes other instances of Mathews and Lane buying up remainders from publishers in the late 1880s and early 1890s, including *Love in Idleness*, by H. C. Beeching, J. W. Mackail, and J. B. B. Nichol, which Mathews and Lane bought from Kegan Paul and Trench. They also bought the unsold, unbound sheets of Oscar Wilde's *Poems*, his first volume of poetry, from its publisher Bogue and Company; they then had the designer Charles Rickets create a new title, half-title, and cover, had Wilde sign the copies, and watched their new issue sell out within days of its publication in May 1892. See Nelson, *The Early Nineties*, 79.

catalogue's more than 500 titles, the most expensive item is Robert Browning's *Paracelsus*, at £6 6*s*.[64] Two years later, in its sixth catalogue, the diversity of Elkin Mathews's inventory would still be apparent, but the list of modern authors represented would also continue to expand, with the addition of such writers as Robert Bridges, Michael Field, and Richard Le Gallienne.[65]

Books, Beauty, and Bosh

The appearance of Richard Le Gallienne in this sixth catalogue also marked a milestone for Elkin Mathews in the transition from bookseller to bookmaker: the title listed, *Volumes in Folio*, was the first work to be published by the firm, in 1889. Over the 1890s, first together and then on their own, Mathews and Lane would publish hundreds of works, mostly poetry, and the two have been credited with sparking a poetical renaissance at the end of century. Describing another Le Gallienne work published by Elkin Mathews in the early 1890s, Katharine Tynan (later a Bodley Head poet herself) remarked on the popular response the Elkin Mathews publication had elicited. "I don't know by what legerdemain [Le Gallienne] and his publishers work," she wrote, "but here, in an age as stony to poetry as the ages of Chatterton and Richard Savage, we find the full edition of his book sold before publication. How is it done, Messrs Elkin Mathews and John Lane?" she queried, "for, without deprecating Mr Le Gallienne's sweetness and charm, I doubt that the marvel would have been wrought under another publisher."[66]

---

[64] Elkin Mathews, Cat. 1 (Dec. 1887).
[65] Elkin Mathews, Cat. 6 (1889).
[66] Tynan, qtd. in Elkin Mathews & John Lane, "List of Books in Belles Lettres" (1893), PCEM.

Tynan may have posed her question rhetorically, but it is a valuable one to consider: just how was it done? The resurgence of poetry ushered by the publications of Elkin Mathews was certainly built on the strength of their titles. Yet it was also due to the format of these books, which were stylishly decorated by such artists as Beardsley, Charles Ricketts, and C. H. Shannon and published in limited editions—typically of fewer than 600 copies, with an additional large paper or other special edition of fewer than 100—a format that witnessed a brief but bright spark of popularity in the early and mid-1890s, alongside the rising interest in collecting modern authors. Looking back on the period, J. H. Slater identified the years 1893 and 1894 as those in which people "turned their attention to what were known as 'Limited Editions' and raged furiously."[67] The *Bookman* also took note in 1893 of the "growing demand" for limited editions and identified the large paper editions of Dobson's *The Ballad of Beau Brocade* (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1892) and Lang's *The Green Fairy Book* (Longmans, Green, 1892) as examples of limited editions whose popularity had caused them to sell out before publication.[68] Other in-demand limited editions of the early 1890s included additional titles by Dobson and Lang, as well as works by Tennyson, Gale, Eugene Field, George Meredith, and John Greenleaf Whittier.[69]

---

[67] Slater, *Romance of Book Collecting*, 119.
[68] "News Notes," *Bookman*, Jan. 1893, 112. The large paper edition of *The Ballad of Beau Brocade* consisted of 450 copies, the large paper edition of *The Green Fairy Book* of 150.
[69] These included Lang's *Letters to Dead Authors* (Longmans, Green, 1892) and *The Library* (Macmillan, 1892), Dobson's *Horace Walpole* (Dodd, Mead, 1890) and *Proverbs in Porcelain* (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1893), Field's *With Trumpet and Drum* (Charles Scribners' Sons, 1892) and *The Holy Cross* (Stone & Kimball, 1893), Gale's *A Country Muse* (David Nutt, 1892) and *Cricket Songs* (Methuen, 1894), Meredith's *The Tale of Chloe* (Ward, Lock & Bowden, 1894), Tennyson's *The Death of Oenone* (Macmillan, 1892), and Whittier's *At Sundown* (Riverside, 1892).

Mathews and Lane were thus entering a market that may have been apathetic to poetry but was hungry for limited editions. This was a fact unlikely to have been lost on two men who had made a career out of selling books, and as they turned to publishing, their experience with bookselling placed Mathews and Lane in an advantageous position for navigating a market that increasingly privileged the works of contemporaries as collectible books. Of course there were practical considerations for printing in limited editions, not least among them the potential for limited demand. Yet in their catalogues, Mathews and Lane clearly used the limited sizes as a means of promoting the works, relying on the language of scarcity to entice buyers. Rather than offering notes about content or design, these catalogue entries reference the book's availability, with "very few remain" appearing as the common refrain. Similarly, the catalogues of Mathews and Lane reprinted glowing reviews not of the titles they published but of the collectible nature of these publications. A blurb from the *St James Gazette*, for instance, opined that Elkin Mathews had "managed, by means of limited editions and charming workmanship to impress book-buyers with the belief that a volume may have an aesthetic and commercial value. They have made it possible to speculate in the latest discovered poet as in a new company—with the difference that an operation in the former can be done with three half-crowns."[70] Tynan's admiring review of the firm appeared alongside this one in Elkin Mathews catalogues from 1893 and 1894 and closed with her belief that the publishers "indeed produce books so delightfully that it must give added pleasure to the hoarding of first editions." Such reviews promoted the idea that the collectibility

[70] Qtd. in Elkin Mathews & John Lane, "List of Books in Belles Lettres" (1893), PCEM.

of these books at least matched if not outweighed their contents, a sentiment that Elkin Mathews implicitly endorsed by reprinting the reviews inside their catalogues' front covers.

Other contemporaries, however, saw the firm's trade in limited editions as a cause not for celebration but for suspicion. In 1893, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, complaining about the literary worth of many authors published in limited editions, specifically targeted Elkin Mathews and alleged that the firm issued "nearly all their books on the principle that rarity, not excellence, involves a speedy rise in price."[71] Mathews and Lane shot back with a rejoinder to the paper, claiming that the "commercial value of the books after the edition has been exhausted never enters into our calculations" and pointing out that since February 1892, when Lane had become a named partner, all publications had been taken entirely at the firm's risk.[72] This defense, though, did not prevent *Punch* the following year from producing an even more scathing take on the firm's publications in the form of a mock advertisement for "The O'er-rated Bosh Company (Limited), caterers by (self) appointment to the Yellow-book, the Rhymers' Club, and Nobody Else in Particular."[73]

Limited Editions and the Attack on the First Edition Citadel

Despite the criticism of limited editions and a general abeyance of their popularity following the turn of the century, the format boomed once again in the 1920s—so much so that Elkin Mathews, having launched the trend, now found

[71] Qtd. in Waller, *Writers, Readers, and Reputations*, 30.
[72] "Limited Editions" [Letter].
[73] Qtd. in Waller, *Writers, Readers, Reputations*, 20.

themselves suspicious of it. Thirty-six years after the *Punch* cartoon, the firm featured a preface to its Catalogue 34 on the subject of limited editions, spurred by the late-1920s explosion in the format. If, in 1894, Mathews and Lane had been accused of pushing gimmicky productions, by 1930, Elkin Mathews Ltd. was the accuser, denouncing the new crop of limited editions as "artificial" and even potentially "pernicious." To be sure, one could argue for the literary and bibliographic superiority of limited editions produced by Charles Elkin Mathews and John Lane versus many of those appearing in the 1920s—although the preface's failure to mention the similarities between its complaints about limited editions and those lobbed against Mathews and Lane could raise questions about its judiciousness. Nevertheless, the preface offers a compelling explanation for the recent spate of limited editions. As the author describes it, "The growth of the habit of collecting first editions of contemporary authors, and the high prices which are sometimes paid for these first editions, has produced a situation which was inevitable. Neither the publisher nor the author can reap any benefit from the enhanced prices of ordinary first editions. It was not to be expected that this potential source of income should permanently evade them, and the limited edition is their answer, their, so to speak, attack on the first edition citadel."[74]

In fact, the limited edition had not been publishers' only line of attack on the citadel that was the modern firsts collectors' market. As they watched the popularity and, moreover the values, of first editions rise, publishers actively sought to take advantage of the interest in modern firsts collecting to increase their sales. *Publishers' Weekly* reported in 1927 on one unnamed publisher who

[74] "Limited Editions," Elkin Mathews Ltd. Cat. 34 (Dec. 1930), 3.

was sending ads for first editions directly to consumers to give the false impression that these first editions could be bought from the publisher only, rather than from booksellers. To make matters worse, a book advertised as a first edition in one of these mailings was actually a reprint. This direct-order campaign incensed booksellers, including one who likened the action to an author claiming that first editions could only be purchased from him. *Publishers' Weekly* generously chalked the action up to ignorance, speculating that the probable explanation for such a campaign was that "some very energetic person suddenly put in charge of building up a mail-order business does not realize that such an invitation to private buyers is an act of bad faith which a publishing house would not wish to countenance."[75] This "act of bad faith" may have been an extreme attempt to capitalize on buyers' interests in obtaining first editions, but advertisements of the period additionally reflect publishers' attempts to profit—more honestly, albeit—from the modern firsts trend. A 1930 Doubleday, Doran ad for *Thy Servant, A Dog*, for instance, highlighted the work as a "genuine Kipling first." For those who could only look back with envy on purchasers of *Barrack Room Ballads* or *The Jungle Book* upon publication, here, Doubleday's ad suggested, was their opportunity to get into the game by owning a Kipling first edition. The Indianapolis publisher Bobbs-Merrill took a similar approach in a 1928 ad for Edward Garnett's *Letters from Joseph Conrad*. Running in *Publishers' Weekly* and directed at booksellers, the ad promised sellers the opportunity to offer to customers "an authentic Conrad first edition at an extraordinarily reasonable price." "Have you realized the full value of this

[75] "First Editions by Mail Direct," *8*25.

opportunity?" the ad implored. "Several booksellers have found their best customers particularly grateful for a chance to purchase this volume. Rare book dealers are eagerly snapping up the edition."[76] Note the advertisement's suggestion that the interest in modern firsts extended beyond those who frequented rare book dealers. Modern firsts, as the ad indicated to booksellers, were not just important to the collector; they could also be important to the consumer. Bobbs-Merrill thus exploited the broadening interest in modern first editions to stimulate attention to Garnett's book.

But if publishers attempted to encourage the sales of regular trade first editions, the sudden explosion in the late 1920s of limited editions by modern authors from trade publishers corroborates the notion that publishers saw these books as their strongest point of entry into the "first edition citadel." Major publishers including Macmillan; Harper & Brother; Doubleday, Doran; Knopf; and Faber & Faber offered limited editions simultaneous to, or in advance of, trade editions. Elegant bibliophilic features marked some limited editions as distinct from their regular trade brethren. Knopf, for example, offered titles—among them Willa Cather's *The Professor's House* (1925), Thomas Beer's *The Road to Heaven* (1927), and Joseph Hergesheimer's *The Limestone Tree* (1930)—in numbered and signed editions printed on Japanese vellum and bound in vellum. On the other end of the spectrum lay less extravagant limited editions, such as Macmillan's American issue of John Masefield's *The Wanderer of Liverpool*, distinguished from the regular American trade edition only in having been signed by the author and numbered. In all cases, of course, limited editions

[76] "*Letters from Joseph Conrad*" [ad], 1668.

were significantly more expensive than trade editions: in the late 1920s, Knopf books bound in vellum retailed at $25, where trade copies typically sold for $2.00 or $2.50; similarly, Macmillan titles ranged from $25.00 and $10.00 for limited editions.

For the most part, these limited editions of modern authors are distinct from the fine editions that saw a publishing boom in 1920s America.[77] Motivated by a desire to produce works of bibliographic grandeur and craftsmanship, that boom, led by printers such as Porter Garnett and Edwin Grabhorn and publishers including Bennett Cerf and George Macy, brought about such masterpieces of printing as the 1930 Random House edition of *Leaves of Grass*, a stunningly beautiful folio volume designed and produced by Edwin and Robert Grabhorn with woodcuts by Valenti Angelo. Yet while these fine editions tended to feature previously published titles, some areas of overlap existed between the fine press work of the 1920s and the simultaneous rise of limited editions of modern authors. The fine book press of Crosby Gaige, for instance, produced the first editions of such works as Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, Carl Sandburg's *Good Morning, America*, and Edwin Arlington Robinson's *Sonnets, 1889-1928*, issued in signed, limited editions. As the distributor of these works, Random House promoted them in a 1928 *Publishers' Weekly* ad placing heavy emphasis on their status as first editions. "Random House Announces The First Editions of Four Outstanding Books of the Fall Season," the ad's headline proclaims, with the words "The First Editions" appearing even larger than the titles of these editions.

[77] For more on this publishing explosion in fine press books in post-World War I America, see Megan Benton's *Beauty and the Book*.

Should the viewer require any further reminder that these are first editions, the ad's copy continues: "These are the recognized first editions for both England and America and will almost certainly command substantial premiums in short time. Enterprising booksellers should take advantage of the public's growing interest in modern first editions."[78]

Beyond Random House's blatant attempts to appeal to the popularity of first editions collecting, what stands out in this ad is the term "recognized first editions." To be sure, Random House needed to distinguish between multiple first editions. In the case of *Orlando*, there appeared in October 1928 Random House's Crosby Gaige edition, printed by W. E. Rudge with typography by Frederick Warde; the Hogarth Press edition; and the Harcourt, Brace edition. Having been published on October 2, 1928—nine days before the Hogarth edition and sixteen before the Harcourt, Brace one—the Random House edition was indeed the first of these firsts.[79] But without a knowledge of exact publishing dates—or without a publisher's promotion—how was one to know which of the growing possibilities of editions was actually the first? And even when they preceded trade editions, were limited editions always the first editions?

These were also the questions, as *Publishers' Weekly* reported in 1927, facing one woman who wanted to own the first edition of Edna St. Vincent Millay's *The King's Henchman*. Was it Harper & Brother's Artists' Edition—one of 500 copies signed by Millay and the composer Deem Taylor? Or was it their trade edition? Or, further still, was it Fred Rullman's first edition of the libretto

[78] "Random House Announces" [ad], 2101.
[79] See Kirkpatrick and Clarke, *Bibliography of Virginia Woolf*, 60-63.

for the opera? To be safe, *Publishers' Weekly* reported, the woman had purchased not only the libretto, but also both the limited and the trade editions. "*Semper fidelis*!," the magazine exclaimed (and Harper likely cheered along with them).[80] In 1931, the novelist and collector George Barr McCutcheon assured those perplexed by the choice between the limited and trade editions that while there had been incongruities in the past, limited editions rarely followed trade editions anymore and concluded that "the special editions are real firsts and are quite handsome books, well worth possessing and preserving."[81] Vincent Starrett offered the more ambiguous opinion in one of his *Saturday Evening Post* articles that "both the limited and the market editions are first editions, one equally with the other, when publication is simultaneous. The limited edition is more desirable, because it is a finer book, physically speaking, but its smaller brother is no less authentic a first."[82] In spite of these attempts to weigh in on the priority of limited versus trade editions, confusion among those who sought modern firsts escalated, as *Publishers' Weekly* testified throughout the late 1920s, especially as the candidates for potential first editions seemed to grow. In 1927, the magazine pointed to the complications facing those who sought to determine the priority of Edwin Arlington Robinson's *Tristram*: Macmillan's limited edition had been issued in March, and its trade edition on May 10, but then there was the Literary Guild edition, issued on May 5—five days, that is, before the trade edition.[83] A few months later, *Publishers' Weekly* joked that advance copies of books provided to the trade ought to be considered the true first editions. "To tell the

[80] "In the Book Market," *PW,* 5 Mar. 1927, 863.
[81] McCutcheon, *Books Once Were Men*, 56-57.
[82] Starrett, "ABC of First Editions," 80.
[83] "First Editions of Robinson," 2063.

truth, we are getting so uppity, a mere first edition, or even a limited edition, available to just anybody, no longer lures us," the magazine waggishly declared, highlighting not only, through the use of the first-person plural pronoun, the seeming ubiquity of modern firsts collectors, but also the increasing dilemmas they faced about the most desirable format.[84] And in 1929, John Winterich reported in the magazine of *hearing* an interesting first edition by George Bernard Shaw at the Phoenix Book Shop, which specialized in modern firsts. Consisting of two double-disc records entitled *Spoken English and Broken English*, the work was a "quite legitimate first edition," according to Winterich, "because a transcript of the records accompanies each set, and can be obtained only with the records." Winterich half-jokingly worried over the "horrendous possibilities" these records opened up to first editions collectors: "What if Mr. Shaw should turn composer and produce rolls of automatic music? What if Mr. Shaw should write a talking movie?" he wondered, pointing out that Shaw had in fact appeared in a film. "What if he turned sky writer, or Stone Mountain sculptor?" Where was the first edition collector to draw the line?[85]

Limited Editions, Unlimited

Records and advance copies and book club editions may have thrown some first editions collectors into a tizzy. But the question of priority between the limited edition and the trade edition was regarded as a more serious matter, fuelled by a sense that while a limited edition may have appeared before a trade edition, there

[84] "In the Book Market," *PW*, 6 Aug. 1927, 395.
[85] Winterich, "Good Second Hand Condition," *PW*, 26 Jan. 1929, 438-39.

was still something artificial about limited editions. This suspicion of limited editions' legitimacy echoed throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s, resounding in specialized trade and collecting publications as well as in the popular press, where writers including A. Edward Newton and Richard Curle advised those interested in becoming collectors to avoid limited editions. As Curle instructed a *World's Work* audience, "limited editions of a thousand copies, each signed by the author … partake of the nature of a business proposition and, having little personality about them, yield more satisfaction to the producer than to the purchaser."[86]

Suspicions of limited editions' artificiality were not unfounded. Publishers' decisions to release limited editions in advance of trade editions certainly appear to have been motivated foremost by a desire to gain control over the interest in first editions. The publication history of Siegfried Sassoon's first prose works is suggestive of this. Faber & Faber published a signed, limited edition of Sassoon's *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* in 1929, one year after the successful trade edition (issued under Faber & Gwynne). When it came time to issue the book's sequel, *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930), Faber & Faber published the limited edition first, one week ahead of the trade edition, thus obliging anyone who wanted to own a first edition of the work to buy the higher priced limited edition. Additionally, while many limited editions offered special bibliographic features, the fact that others showed little distinction from trade editions makes their existence questionable. A particularly ridiculous example is the limited edition of D. H. Lawrence's *Glad Ghosts*, published by Ernest Benn in

[86] Curle, "What Books to Collect," 164.

October 1926 and distinguished only by the addition of the words "This edition limited to five copies." For this, buyers paid 6*s*—5*s* more than the "ordinary edition" also published that month. (In fact, the editions appeared so similar that the publisher issued the little book in an envelope with the words "Limited Edition" stamped on the outside, lest anyone confuse the two.)[87] Finally, limitations placed on publications varied so widely as to feel arbitrary—and especially so for editions lacking obvious bibliographic merits.[88]

Among the complaints against the torrent of limited editions of modern authors, two especially cogent arguments stand out: one comes from the book collector, novelist, and publisher Michael Sadleir and appeared in *Publishers' Weekly*; the other takes the form of the unsigned preface to Elkin Mathews's Catalogue 34.[89] Aside from feeling that many limited editions lacked bibliographic justification, both Sadleir and the preface writer also voice concerns about the literary worth of titles issued in limited editions. Even the *Economic Survey of the Book Industry, 1930-1931* shared these concerns, caustically observing that that while some limited editions may hold a "certain prestige value," the publishing industry has "with its usual suicidal tendency … reduced

[87] As described in the preface to Elkin Mathews Ltd, Cat. 34 (Dec. 1930), 5. Citing "ludicrous blunders" among the recent boom in limited editions of modern authors, the writer also mentions the limited edition of L. A. G. Strong's *Dewer Rides*, distinguished by Strong's signature and a 15*s* label pasted by the publisher, Gollancz, over the dust wrapper to conceal the regular price of 7*s* 6*d*.

[88] Benton reports how the printer Carl Rollins, who complained of this problem in his regular *Saturday Review* column, delighted in Boni and Liveright's advertisement for *But Gentlemen Marry Brunettes*, by Anita Loos. The ad took aim at the limited editions vogue by publicizing Loos's first edition as "strictly limited to 1,037,296 copies, most of which are for sale. The type has been distributed (after the making of six sets of plates), the paper is pure ragamuffin, coated (only in spots, we regret to say) by Ralph Barton." See Benton, *Beauty and the Book*, 224.

[89] Percy Muir, who joined the firm in January 1930, is a likely candidate for the preface's author.

this prestige to a minus quantity by the kind of titles issued in limited editions."[90] Sadleir puts a more poetic ring on the same point, arguing that "fine feathers, even in bibliophily, do not make fine birds." He explains, "There are many handsome editions on the shelves of bookshops today whose contents do not deserve their elegance of format," and he contends that publishers "take too uncritical a view of what should be issued in format de luxe."[91]

In general, Sadleir and the preface writer oppose the explosion of limited editions in the late 1920s, particularly when they were released simultaneous to or ahead of trade editions. Yet both writers acknowledge that, in some cases, limited editions were justified. As Sadleir describes it, "There is only one genuine excuse for the simultaneous issue of a work in regular and in special form.... *Is the book really a good book?* If so, it is reasonable for certain buyers to desire it in a dignified and permanent form. The wish is equivalent to a wish to show a courtesy to an author and to the book itself."[92] The preface writer similarly writes of the "dignity" a book should attain before being published in limited edition.[93] In other words, for these critics, limited editions could be an acceptable means of celebrating and preserving worthy titles.

For the seemingly unlimited flow of limited editions, Sadleir blames publishers, and he and the preface writer accuse speculators of inflating the prices for these books. In the end, however, both writers place the impetus for halting the chaotic limited editions situation on collectors. "The remedy," the preface writer proposes, "lies with the collector." As he explains it, "If collectors

[90] Cheney, 108.
[91] Sadleir, "Limited Editions," 300.
[92] Ibid., 302.
[93] "Limited Editions," Elkin Mathews Ltd. Cat. 34 (Dec. 1930), 6.

refuse to support the continuance of hold-up methods: if they instruct their booksellers to send them the first trade editions and cancel their orders for limited editions, they will put a spoke in the wheel of the speculator who gobbles up two-thirds of the edition intended for collectors, and they will buy their books at between one-quarter and one-sixth of the price." Sadleir is less extreme in his advice, conceding that limited editions are desirable in some cases. But he also instructs collectors in how to solve the problems posed by the unimpeded growth of limited editions, advising them to consider publishers' imprints, read reviews, and follow their own instincts.

Yet while Sadleir and the preface writer suggest that the problem would improve if only collectors would be more discriminating in their choices, the fear ultimately for these critics appears to be the possibility that the collector has been replaced by the consumer, that everyone with enough money and enough sense—or lack thereof—to purchase a book designated a "limited edition" might be able to regard themselves as bibliophiles. Consider again Sadleir's statement on the acceptability, in some cases, of limited editions: if the book is a good book, "it is reasonable *for certain buyers* to desire it in a dignified and permanent form" (italics mine). Not every purchaser of a limited edition is a collector, and for Sadleir and others, the format's popularity pointed to the infringement on the rarefied collecting world by the ignoble consumer.

And if these concerns about who should be purchasing limited editions sound remarkably familiar, it is, of course, because they echo those raised about the collecting of modern first editions since the field's beginning. In some cases, limited editions literally supplanted first trade editions by their earlier

publications. These critics, though, worried about something greater: the potential for limited editions to usurp the collecting of modern first editions, or what the preface writer referred to as the threat the limited edition posed to the "very existence of the sun in which it demanded a place."[94] The blatant commercialism and popularity of limited editions posed a danger to modern firsts collectors' hard-fought battle for respectability. For these critics, limited editions seemed to cast a shadow over what they were long ready to see recognized as a reputable pursuit, the collecting of modern first editions. And yet, these critics were grappling with what had secured the very development of the modern firsts field: the democratizing of collecting. The pioneers of the modern firsts field wanted to substitute the objects of collecting. Breaking with a tradition that had focused on the old, early modern firsts collectors argued for value in the new. But the field also suggested that anyone could be a collector, that anyone could potentially determine what was a collectible book. These critics of the limited editions trend were thus running up against the lasting achievement of modern firsts: in its development, the modern firsts field had changed not only the objects but also the rules of collecting.

[94] Elkin Mathews Ltd., Cat. 34 (Dec. 1930), 3.

Coda

The Future of Firsts

The development of the modern firsts field reshaped the world of book collecting. Parting with a past that had focused on the old, modern firsts collectors welcomed in the new. Early collectors of modern firsts sought books they deemed important before history had made that judgment. Rather than gathering the best which has *been* thought and said, they focused on the best which is *being* thought and said. As such, the development of the modern firsts field redefined the objects of book collecting. At the same time, it also redefined who could be a collector and who could benefit from book collecting, financially or otherwise.

In spite of the excitement during the 1920s about the future of firsts, by the early 1930s, a slump in prices had dampened the boisterous optimism of modern firsts collecting. The period's critics wondered whether prices would ever again rise to their former levels. Would collectors continue to seek out the books and manuscripts of their contemporaries?[1]

Eighty years have passed since these questions arose, and from our vantage point today, it is tempting to laugh at fears that the collecting of modern first editions may ever have appeared to be a passing fad. More than one-third of the 450 booksellers who compose the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America (ABAA), the primary organization of rare and antiquarian book dealers

[1] A. J. A. Symons was one critic who posed these questions. A bibliographer and modern firsts enthusiast, Symons had faith that the market would rebound. See Symons, "The Modern First Edition Market."

in the US, and more than one-tenth of the 2,000 booksellers who belong to the ABAA's parent organization, the International League of Antiquarian Booksellers (ILAB), identify modern first editions as one of their specialties; additionally, the current ILAB president, Tom Congalton, is a leading expert in the field of modern firsts.[2] Auction houses regularly feature sales of modern firsts, and sales of some especially fine collections have attracted attention outside the book collecting world, including the 2004 Maurice Neville sale and, more recently, the 2012 Clive Hirschhorn sale.[3] The 2002 sale of the library belonging to real-estate developer Roger Rechler, who specialized in association copies, brought record prices for modern firsts, including *On the Road*, presented by Jack Kerouac to Joyce Johnson, for $185,500; *Lolita*, presented by Vladimir Nabokov to Graham Greene, for $273,500; and *Ulysses*, in its first limited issue, presented by James Joyce to the publisher Henry Kaeser, for the staggering sum of $460,500.[4] Among books without any additional association value, perhaps the most cherished are copies of *The Great Gatsby* in its first state dust jacket, which have regularly sold for more than $120,000 since 2002 and reached the height of $182,000 in June 2009.[5] Modern firsts, according to the auction house Bloomsbury, is the field of book collecting and dealing that has seen the most

[2] These figures are derived from an Apr. 2013 search of the ABAA's online directory and a search of ILAB's 2013-2014 printed directory. Tom Congalton is the owner of Between the Covers, one of the best known dealers of modern firsts in the US.
[3] For examples of attention in the mainstream media to the Neville sale (Sotheby's, Part I, 13 April 2004) see Edmonds, "For Some There's Nothing More Exciting Than Discovering a Rare First," *Birmingham Post*; and "Dylan Love Letter Fetches £12,000," *BBC News*. On the Hirschhorn sale (Bloomsbury, 25 Oct. 2012) see Karni, "Book Collector Selling First-Edition Bond Series," *New York Post*; Mallalieu, "Your Bid," *The Times*; and "Book Fan's Haul," *The Sun*.
[4] The Roger Rechler sale was held at Christie's 11 Oct. 2002 and realized $6,928,898. That price and those cited within the text include the buyer's premium.
[5] At Bonham's (New York), 10 Apr. 2009.

growth in the past decade, and they cite the fact that "prices have rocketed for many of the classics of twentieth century literature."[6]

And yet it is precisely this fact, that the most prized books are already classics, that makes the 1930s musings about the fate of modern first editions difficult to evaluate today. At the time that critics were wondering about the future of firsts, some of the most sought modern first editions may have been poised to be classics. But as we have seen especially in cases from the field's start, the literary worth of many collected modern firsts was under debate. In contrast today, when modern firsts are understood to include books that were published more than 100 years ago, the high points are titles already recognized as canonical works. For better or for worse, modern firsts collecting is not marked by the same risk-taking of its early years.

To be sure, the collecting of living authors and recently published works—designated as "ultra-moderns" or "hypermoderns" when they've appeared in the past twenty years—continues today. Works by such critically acclaimed authors as Margaret Atwood, Julian Barnes, A. S. Byatt, J. M. Coetzee, Junot Diáz, Cormac McCarthy, Ian McEwan, E. Annie Proulx, and Philip Roth can command hundreds of dollars in the collectors' market, with first books or limited editions fetching in the low thousands.[7] There are also the firsts of today whose immense popularity among readers (and, in some cases, moviegoers) has fuelled their rise as collectors' items—books such as Dan Brown's *Angels & Demons* (Pocket Books, 2000), Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* (Little Brown, 2005), Christopher

[6] Bloomsbury, "Modern First Editions."
[7] See entries for these authors in the well-regarded price guide Ahearn and Ahearn, *Collected Books*.

Paolini's Inheritance series, and works by Stephen King. And then there is *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Bloomsbury, 1997), the first title in what is perhaps today's most beloved book series in the US and Britain. It is undoubtedly this fact, coupled with the first edition's scarcity (there are around 200 hardbound copies in collectable condition), that has made *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* the most expensive first edition by a living author today.[8] A recent price guide estimates the first edition's value at $25,000; in 2007, a signed copy sold at auction for £27,370.[9] These are tremendous prices, of course. And yet, compare them to that record set in 1927 for the highest price paid for a book by a living author—for Rudyard Kipling's *The Smith Administration* (1891) at $14,000, or more than $187,000 in today's dollars. Similarly, prices paid in the late 1920s and early 1930s for such works as *Chance, The Dynasts, and The Man of Property* have no equivalents now. For the most part today, works that reach into the tens of thousands of dollars in the collectors' market are those regarded as landmarks in the history of Anglo-American literature. The high spots collecting market has largely returned to the tried and true.

Admittedly, generalizations about the market and comparisons between titles can be dangerous when such factors as timing, scarcity, and condition make each sale unique. Further still, price comparisons open up inevitable questions about the relationship between literary worth and market worth. Why should

[8] The first edition of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, published in pictorial boards and no dust jacket, had an initial print run of 500. Of these, approximately 300 copies went to libraries, leaving only 200 in the condition desired by collectors.
[9] See Ahearn and Ahearn, *Collected Books*. The 2007 sale was held at Bloomsbury Auctions, 24 May 2007, and the price included fees. In May 2013, a first edition of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* that included personal annotations and twenty-two original illustrations by J. K. Rowling sold for a record-breaking £150,000 (approximately $225,000) at Sotheby's in London.

one title be worth more than another? Is this book for which collectors are now willing to pay hundreds or thousands of dollars slated to stand the literary test of time? These are the evaluative questions that modern firsts collecting has provoked since its start.

Indeed, ultimately, in spite of changes in modern firsts collecting, many of the tenets that shaped the field in its early years remain today. High payoffs for some modern titles continue to spur the idea that just about anyone might be an accidental collector of a valuable modern first. Headlines such as "Turn Your Novels Into Money Makers," "Those Books in the Attic Could be Worth a Fortune," and "How to Turn Over a Fortune Just Sitting There on the Shelf"—all published in the past ten years—could just as easily have appeared in the pages of 1920s newspapers and magazines.[10] And while it seems that no organization ever took up the mantle of the 1927 First Edition Society on the national scale the short-lived group intended, several small first editions clubs operate out of bookstores today.[11]

Even with the revolutionary rise of digital culture, the collecting of modern firsts continues to circle around many of the same issues that guided its early development. Claims made today for the authenticity of first editions amid the rise of the electronic book echo those regarding the "original" status of first

---

[10] Jones, "Turn Your Novels Into Money Makers," *The Independent*, 30 July 2005; Miller, "Those Books in the Attic Could be Worth a Fortune," *The Herald* (Glasgow), 2 Sept. 2003; Alberge, "How to Turn Over a Fortune Just Sitting There on the Shelf," *The Times* (London), 2 Sept. 2003. These types of articles appear to be especially popular in Britain; see also Birtles, "Dust Jacket Required: How to Cash In Between the Covers," *The Independent*, 4 Apr. 2004; Gregory, "Judge a Book by Its Cover," *The Times* (London), 22 June 2007; and Miller, "Modern First Editions," *The Guardian,* 22 May 2010.

[11] Among them are Greenlight Bookstore (Brooklyn, NY), Odyssey Bookshop (South Hadley, MA), Parnassus Books (Nashville, TN), Alabama Booksmith (Birmingham, AL), Lemuria Books (Jackson, MS), and Harvard University Bookstore's Signed First Edition Club.

editions voiced during the booming reprints market of the late nineteenth century. Similarly, while the Internet has transformed the buying, selling, and collecting of books, it continues the path set by popular publications of the 1920s in extending the accessibility of information about modern firsts to those outside the world of collecting. Booksellers' websites offer guides to specialized terminology, tips for new collectors, and essays on collecting particular authors. The massive online marketplace AbeBooks offers instructive articles on buying, valuing, and caring for collectible modern firsts, as well as a monthly "Most Expensive List" feature. "Which of these books would you most like to own?," the site tantalizes its Facebook followers. And potential collectors who require further instruction need look no further than YouTube, where AbeBooks offers a series of videos explaining subjects like "*The Great Gatsby* and the $100,000 Dust Jacket" and "How to Identify a First Edition Book." Such online features promote the powerful idea that anyone has the potential to be a modern firsts collector. And as such, they carry out the legacy of modern first editions, a legacy borne out of a dissatisfaction with rigid definitions not only of what counts as literature, but also who counts as a collector.

Bibliography

Manuscript Collections

Elkin Mathews, Ltd. Mss. The Lilly Library, Indiana University.

Charles Elkin Mathews Papers. Reading University, Special Collections. Microfilm ed. Columbia University.

[Percy] Muir Mss. II. The Lilly Library, Indiana University.

Thomas J. Wise Collection of Papers, 1876-1937. The Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, New York Public Library.

Bookseller Catalogues, Auction Catalogues, and Other Price Guides

American Book Prices Current. Vols. 1-41. New York: Bancroft-Parkman, 1895-1935.

Anderson Galleries. *Catalogue of the William Harris Arnold Collection of Manuscripts, Books and Autograph Letters, to be Sold by Order of Gertrude Weld Arnold*. New York, 1924.

Benjamin, W. E. *A List of First Editions of Nineteenth Century Authors now on Exhibition and for Sale by William Evarts Benjamin*. Catalogue 53. New York, June 1893.

Book Prices Current. Vol. 1-50. London: Elliot Stock, 1888-1936.

Books and Letters, Being a Price List, with Buyers' Names of First Editions, collected by William H. Arnold. Sold at the Rooms of Bangs & Co., New York... May 17 and 8, 1901. New York: The Literary Collector Company, 1901.

Bangs & Co. *Catalogue of the Unique Collection Made by Charles B. Foote*. New York, 1894.

Dodd, Mead. *A Short Title Catalogue of English Literature of the Nineteenth Century, Comprising First Editions, Collected Sets, Extra-Illustrated Books, Etc., ... For Sale by Dodd, Mead & Company*. Catalogue 41. New York, Apr. 1896.

Elkin Mathews. Catalogues of Books for Sale. Catalogues 1-6 ns. London, 1887-89.

Elkin Mathews and John Lane. Catalogues of Books for Sale (*Lists of Belles Lettres*). London, 1893-94.

Elkin Mathews. Catalogues of Books for Sale. London, 1896-97, 1898-99, 1904-05, 1908-09.

Elkin Mathews Ltd. Catalogues of Books for Sale. Catalogues 1-50. London, 1922-1932.

Hill, Walter M. Catalogues of Books for Sale. Chicago, 1915-37.

Hodgson & Co. *A Catalogue of the Library of the Late Elkin Mathews, Esq. ... Sold by Auction by Messrs. Hodgson & Co.* London, 1922.

Leon & Brother. *Catalogue of First Editions of American Authors, Poets, Philosophers ... etc. Compiled, Arranged and for Sale by Leon & Brother*. New York, 1885.

Livingston, Luther S. *Auction Prices of Books: A Representative Record...* 4 vols. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1905.

Pickering & Chatto. *Catalogue of Old and Rare Books Offered for Sale by Pickering & Chatto*. London, 1892.

_____. *Catalogue of Old and Rare Books Being a Portion of the Stock of and Offered for Sale by Pickering & Chatto*. London, 1894.

Charles Scribner's Sons. Catalogues of Books for Sale. Catalogues 88-89. New York, 1929-30.

All Other Published Sources

Adams, Thomas R. and Nicolas Baker. "A New Model for the Study of the Book." *A Potencie of Life: Books in Society*. Ed. Nicolas Barker. London: British Library, 1993. 5-43.

Allen, Trevor. "A Wonderful Library [A Talk with Mr. Thomas J. Wise]." *John O'London's Weekly*, 28 Mar. 1931, 981+.

Altick, Richard D. *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900*. 2nd ed. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1998.

"American First Editions." *New York Times*, 16 Feb. 1901.

Anesko, Michael. "Collected Editions and the Consolidation of Cultural Authority: The Case of Henry James." *Book History* 12 (2009): 186-208.

The Armstrong Browning Library, Baylor University. *The Brownings: A Research Guide*. 2013. Web. 12 May 2013.

Arnold, Levi M. *History of the Origin of All Things Given by the Lord Our God Through Levi M. Arnold*. Privately published, 1852.

Arnold, William Harris. *Books and Letters Collected by William Harris Arnold of New York*. New York: The Marion Press, 1901.

_____. *First Report of a Book Collector: Comprising: A Brief Answer to the Frequent Question, "Why First Editions?"*.... 2nd ed. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1898.

_____. *A Record of Books and Letters, Collected by William Harris Arnold*. New York: Marion Press, 1901.

_____. "The Welfare of the Bookstore." *Atlantic Monthly*. 124 (Aug. 1919): 192-99.

_____. To Philip D. Sherman, 22 June 1920. Harry Lyman Koopman Collection. John Hay Library, Brown University.

Baillie, Edmund J. *John Ruskin: Aspects of His Thought and Teachings*. London: John Pearce, 1882.

Balkun, Mary McAleer. *The American Counterfeit: Authenticity and Identity in American Literature and Culture*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2006.

Barker, Nicolas, and John Collins. *A Sequel to* An Enquiry: *The Forgeries of Buxton Forman and Wise Re-examined*. Berkeley: Scolar Press, 1983.

Basbanes, Nicholas A. *A Gentle Madness: Bibliophiles, Bibliomanes, and the Eternal Passion for Books*. New York: Henry Holt, 1995.

Baudrillard, Jean. "The System of Collecting." *Cultures of Collecting*. Ed. John Elsner and Roger Cardinal. London: Reaktion, 1994. 7-24.

Belk, Russell W. "Collectors and Collecting." *Interpreting Objects and Collections*. Ed. Susan M. Pearce. New York: Routledge, 1994. 317-26.

Bell, Alan. "Wise, Thomas James (1859-1937)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford UP. 2004. Web. 12 May 2013.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." *Illuminations*. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schoken, 1969. 217-51.

Benton, Megan L. *Beauty and the Book: Fine Editions and Cultural Distinction in America*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2000.

[Beresford, James.] *Bibliosophia; or Book-Wisdom. Containing Some Account of the Pride, Pleasure, and Privileges of that Glorious Vocation, Book-Collecting*. London: William Miller, 1810.

Blake, David. *Walt Whitman and the Culture of American Celebrity*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2006.

"The Book Clubs." *Publishers' Weekly*, 9 Apr. 1927, 1498-99.

"Book Collecting for Profit." *Literary Digest* 100 (16 Mar. 1929): 24.

"The Book Gambling Game." *World's Work* 58 (Mar. 1929): 33.

"Books and Authors." *New York Times*, 21 Aug. 1927.

"Books of Today and Fifty Years Ago." *Literary Digest* 44 (17 Feb. 1912): 333-34.

"Books of the Week." *The* [London] *Times*, 16 Mar. 1894.

"Bookseller Fools Poet." Unidentified newspaper clipping dated 6 Dec. [1909]. Rossetti mss. The Lilly Library, Indiana University.

Briggs, Morris H. *Buying and Selling Rare Books*. New York: R. R. Bowker, 1927.

The Brontë Society. *Transactions: Containing Report of Proceedings at Halifax and Huddersfield, and Papers Read Before the Society*. Bradford: Brontë Society Publications, 1899.

Brown, Erica. Introduction to "Investigating the Middlebrow" (Issue). *Working Papers on the Web* 11 (July 2008). Web. 12 May 2013.

Browning, Robert. *The Works of Robert Browning*. Centenary ed. 10 vol. Ed. Frederic G. Kenyon. London: Ernest Benn, 1912.

The Browning Society's Papers. Pts. XII and XIII. London: N. Trübner, 1889-1891.

Bruccoli, Matthew J. "Hawthorne as a Collector's Item, 1885-1924." *Hawthorne Centenary Essays*. Ed. Roy Harvey Pearce. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1964. 387-400.

Cannon, Carl L. *American Book Collectors and Collecting from Colonial Times to the Present*. New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1941.

_____. "The Price of Books." *Outlook* 146 (22 June 1927): 256-57.

Carpenter, B. F. "L. M. Arnold: A Sketch." Preface to *History of the Origin of All Things Given by the Lord Our God through Levi M. Arnold*. Rev. ed. Ashville, NC: Biltmore Press, 1936.

Carter, John. "Looking Backward." *Publishers' Weekly*, 17 Jan. 1931, 300-32.

_____. *Taste and Technique in Book Collecting: A Study of Recent Developments in Great Britain and the United States*. New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1948.

Carter, John, and Graham Pollard. *An Enquiry into the Nature of Certain Nineteenth Century Pamphlets*. 1934. 2nd ed. Ed. Nicolas Barker and John Collins. Berkeley: Scolar Press, 1983.

Carter, John, and Nicolas Baker. *ABC for Book Collectors*. 8th ed. New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll, 2006

Chambers, C. E. S. "Rare Editions" [review of *Early Editions*]. *Athenaeum* 17 Mar. 1894, 346-47.

_____. "Rare Editions" [response to J. H. Slater]. *Athenaeum* 31 Mar. 1894, 411.

Chancellor, E. Beresford. "The Cost of Books." *Fortnightly Review* 115 (Jan. 1924): 167-76.

Cheney, O. H. *Economic Survey of the Book Industry, 1930-1931, Final Report*. New York: National Association of Book Publishers, 1931.

Claudy, Carl H. "Fostering Collectors: The Junior Clerk Learns a Profitable Sideline." *Publishers' Weekly*, 16 July 1927, 199-201.

Clevely, H. D. "How to Collect First Editions." *Publishers' Weekly*. [Ten part weekly series as follows.]

_____. "Complete Collections," 26 July 1924, 386.

_____. "The Condition of Books," 5 July 1924, 33.

_____. "Extending the Collecting Interest," 12 July 1924, 110.

_____. "Facts and Opinions About Modern Collecting," 2 Aug. 1924, 445.

_____. "General Remarks on Collecting," 14 June 1924, 1900.

_____. "Permanence from the Point of View of Interest," 28 June 1924, 2019.

_____. "Picking Up Bargains," 19 July 1924, 187.

_____. "The Sense of Literary Value," 21 June 1924, 1960-61.

_____. "Some Famous Living Authors," 16 Aug. 1924, 542-43.

_____. "W. H. Hudson, J. E. Flecker, Stephen Crane...," 9 Aug. 1924, 489.

Cohn, Jan. *Creating America: George Horace Lorimer and the* Saturday Evening Post. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1989.

Cohn, L. H. "Book Madness." *Scribner's Magazine* 87 (May 1930): 545-53.

"Collecting as a Sport." *Literary Digest* 49 (18 July 1914): 112.

"Collectors and Department Store Books." *New York Times Saturday Review of Books*, 1 July 1899.

Collingwood, W. G. *The Life of John Ruskin*. 1893. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1900.

Collins, John. "Forman, Henry Buxton (1842-1917)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford UP. 2004. Web. 12 May 2013.

_____. *The Two Forgers: A Biography of Harry Buxton Forman and Thomas James Wise*. New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll, 1992.

Connell, Philip. "Bibliomania: Book Collecting, Cultural Politics, and the Rise of Literary Heritage in Romantic Britain." *Representations* 71 (Summer 2000): 24-47.

Coppard, A. E. Introduction. *Writings of Alfred Edgar Coppard*. By Jacob Schwartz. London: The Ulysses Bookshop, 1931.

Curle, Richard. *Collecting American First Editions: Its Pitfalls and Pleasures*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1930.

_____. "What Books to Collect." *World's Work* 58 (June 1929): 90-92+.

Currie, Barton. "The Book Gambling Game." *World's Work* 58 (Mar. 1929): 33.

_____. *Fishers of Books*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1931.

Cushing, Marshall. *The Story of Our Post Office*. Boston: A. M. Thayer & Co., 1893.

"The D. Lothrop Company." *Publishers' Weekly*, 5 Mar. 1887, 345.

Daniels, J. W. *Spiritualism versus Christianity; or, Spiritualism Thoroughly Exposed*. New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1856.

Darnton, Robert. "What is the History of Books?" *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History*. New York: Norton, 1990. Rpt. in *The Book History Reader*. Ed. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery. New York: Routledge, 2002. 9-26.

"Death of Robert Browning." *The* [London] *Times*, 13 Dec. 1889, 9.

De Halsalle, Henry. *The Romance of Modern First Editions*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1931.

DeRicci, Seymour. *The Book Collector's Guide*. 1921. New York: Burt Franklin, 1970.

Dibdin, Thomas Frognall. *The Bibliomania; or Book-Madness; Containing Some Account of the History, Symptoms, and Cure of this Fatal Disease*. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1809.

Dickens, Charles. *The Letters of Charles Dickens*. Vol. 12. Pilgrim ed. Ed. Graham Storey. New York: Oxford UP, 2002.

Dickinson, Donald C. *Dictionary of American Book Collectors*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1986.

Douglas, Norman. *Looking Back: An Autobiographical Excursion*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1933.

"Early Editions" [review]. *Athenaeum*, 26 May 1894, 673-74.

Eckel, J. C. "Points for Book Collectors." *World's Work* 58 (July 1929): 72-75+.

Eisner, Eric. *Nineteenth-Century Poetry and Literary Celebrity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Eliasen, Alan. "Historical Currency Conversions." 2013. Web. 12 May 2013.

Eliot, Simon. "The Three-Decker Novel and its First Cheap Reprint, 1862-94." *The Library* 6th ser. 7 (1985): 38-53.

Eliot, Simon, and Andrew Nash. "Mass Markets: Literature." *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Vol. 6: 1830-1914*. Ed. David McKitterick. New York: Cambridge UP, 2009. 416-42.

[Ellington, C.] "Famous First Editions." *Cornhill Magazine* ns 22 (Mar. 1894): 265-70.

Elsner, John, and Roger Cardinal. *The Cultures of Collecting*. London: Reaktion, 1994.

Esher, Viscount [Reginald Baliol Brett]. Introduction. *Ten Contemporaries: Notes Toward their Definitive Bibliography*. Ed. John Gawsworth. London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1932**.**

Everitt, Charles P. *The Adventures of a Treasure Hunter: A Rare Bookman in Search of American History*. Little, Brown and Co., 1951.

Fabes, Gilbert. *Modern First Editions: Points and Values*. London: W. and G. Foyle, 1929.

Ferris, William H. "A Review of Modern Spiritualism." *The Ladies' Repository*, Mar. 1856, 139-44.

"First Edition Society" [ad]. *New York Times*, 13 Mar. 1927 and 20 Mar. 1927.

"First Edition Society" [ad]. *Publishers' Weekly*, 27 Feb. 1927, 603.

"First Editions." *Speaker* 9 (10 Mar. 1894): 278.

"First Editions of Americans [*sic*] Authors" [Foote Sale]. *The Critic* 22.667 (1 Dec. 1894): 382.

"First Editions by Mail Direct." *Publishers' Weekly*, 17 Sept. 1927, 825.

"First Editions of Robinson." *Publishers' Weekly*, 21 May 1927, 2063.

"First Part of the Arnold Sale." *New York Times*, 22 Dec. 1900.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. 1925. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.

Forman, H. Buxton. *Our Living Poets: An Essay in Criticism*. London: Tinsley Brothers, 1871.

_____. "The Pleasures of a Bookman." *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1910, 780-84.

Furnivall, Frederick J. *A Bibliography of Robert Browning, from 1833 to 1881*. London: N. Trübner, 1881.

_____. *How the Browning Society Came Into Being*. London: Trübner & Co., 1884.

"Futures in Rare Books." *Literary Digest* 55 (22 Sept. 1917): 30.

Gibbons, H. A. *John Wanamaker*. 2 vols. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1926.

Gilmour, Robin. *The Victorian Period: The Intellectual and Cultural Context of English Literature, 1830-1890*. New York: Longman, 1993.

Gordon, William R. *A Three-Fold Test of Modern Spiritualism*. New York: Charles Scribner, 1856

Graff, Gerald. *Professing Literature: An Institutional History*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987.

"Guessing the Durable Books." *Literary Digest* 66 (18 Sept. 1920): 33-34.

Guillory, John. "Literary Study and the Modern System of the Disciplines." *Disciplinarity at the Fin de Siècle*. Ed. Amanda Anderson and Joseph Valente. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2002. 19-43.

Hazlitt, William. *Lectures on the English Poets*. 1818. New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1892.

Hazlitt, William Carew. *The Book Collector: A General Survey of the Pursuit and of Those Who Have Engaged in it at Home and Abroad from the Earliest Period to the Present Time*. London: John Grant, 1904.

Hill, George Birkbeck. *Talks About Autographs*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1896.

Hilliard, John Northern. "Rare Books on the Anglers' Art." *Book Buyer* 17 (Aug. 1898): 36-39.

Hills, Matt. *Fan Cultures*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Hopkins, Frederick M. "Field of Old and Rare Books" [column]. *Publishers' Weekly*, 31 Dec. 1927, 2315-16.

_____. 21 Jan. 1928, 292-94.

Hopkins, Frederick M. "Old and Rare Books" [column]. *Publishers' Weekly*, 22 June 1929, 2878-79.

Housman, A. E. *The Letters of A. E. Housman*. Ed. Archie Burnett. New York: Oxford UP, 2007.

"How the New Books Have More Than Doubled in Twenty-Two Years." *Literary Digest* 46 (1 Mar. 1913): 464.

"How Rare Books Are Found." *Literary Digest* 10.19 (9 Mar. 1895): 552-53.

Hughes, Randolph. Introduction. *Lesbia Brandon*. By A. C. Swinburne. London: Falcon Press, 1952. i-xxxix.

Humble, Nicola. *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel, 1920s to 1950s: Class, Domesticity, and Bohemianism*. New York: Oxford UP, 2001.

Hutchins, Patricia. "Elkin Mathews, Poets' Publisher." *ARIEL 1.4* (1970): 77-95.

"In the Book Market." *Publishers' Weekly*, 5 Mar. 1927, 863.

_____. 6 Aug. 1927, 395.

Irmscher, Christoph. *Longfellow Redux*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2006.

_____. "Popular Poetry." *American History Through Literature, 1870-1920*. Ed. Tom Quirk and Gary Scharnhorst. New York: Scribner's, 2005. 859-67.

Jackson, Joseph. "The Sport of Money Kings." *World's Work* 25 (Nov. 1912): 80-84.

James, Henry. *The Aspern Papers and Other Stories*. 1888. New York: Oxford UP, 2009.

Joline, Adrian H. *Meditations of an Autograph Collector*. New York: Harper, 1902.

Kaestle, Carl F., and Janice A. Radway. *A History of the Book in America*. Vol. 4. *Print in Motion: The Expansion of Publishing and Reading in the United States, 1880-1940*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2009.

Keller, Dean H. "Paul Lemperly." *American Book Collectors and Bibliographers, Second Series*. Ed. Joseph Rosenblum. Dictionary of Literary Biography 187. Detroit: Gale Research, 1997. 208-11.

Kennedy, Richard S., and Donald S. Hair. *The Dramatic Imagination of Robert Browning: A Literary Life*. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 2007.

Kiley, Declan. "Dante Gabriel Rossetti." *New at the Morgan*. The Morgan Library & Museum. 2 July 2009. Web. 12 May 2013.

Kimball, Arthur Reed. "Dr. Phelps and His 'Novel' Course." *Book Buyer* 13 (Apr. 1896): 129-31.

King, Frederick A. "The Poor Collector and His Problems." *Bookman* 36 (Feb. 1913): 615-23.

_____. "The Rich Collector and His Opportunities." *Bookman* 36 (Jan. 1913): 510-23.

Kipling, Rudyard. *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling*. 6 vols. Ed. Thomas Pinney. Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1990-2004.

Kirkpatrick, B. J., and Stuart N. Clarke. *A Bibliography of Virginia Woolf*. 4th ed. New York: Oxford UP, 1997.

Lang, Andrew. "The First Edition Mania." *Illustrated London News*, 21 Apr. 1894.

_____. *Letters on Literature*. 3rd ed. London: Longmans, Green, 1889.

_____. *The Library*. 2nd ed. London: Macmillan & Co., 1892.

Lauer, Josh. "Traces of the Real: Autographomania and the Cult of the Signers in Nineteenth-Century America." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 27.2 (2007): 143-63.

Laurence, Dan H. *Bernard Shaw: A Bibliography*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1983.

Lears, Jackson. *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America*. New York: Basic Books, 1994.

[Lee, Sydney.] "Furnivall, Frederick James." *The Dictionary of National Biography*. 2nd Supplement. Ed. Leslie Stephens. London: Smith, Elder, 1912. 60-66.

Lemperly, Paul. *Among My Books*. Cleveland: The Rowfant Club, 1929.

"*Letters from Joseph Conrad*" [Bobbs-Merill ad]. *Publishers' Weekly*, 31 Mar. 1928, 1668.

"The Life of Books and Cheap Books." *New York Times*, 16 Jan. 1897.

"Limited Editions" [letter from Elkin Mathews and John Lane]. *Pall Mall Gazette*, 31 July 1893.

"Literary and Numismatic Sales of 1889." *The* [London] *Times,* 17 Jan. 1890.

"Literary and Trade Notes." *Publishers' Weekly*, 22 Jan. 1887, 93.

Livingston, Luther S. "First Books of Some English Authors: Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning." *Bookman* 10 (Sept. 1899): 76-81.

M. A. C. [letter.] *Publishers' Weekly,* 13 Mar. 1886, 358-59.

MacDonald, Dwight. "The First Editions of T. J. Wise." *New Yorker*, 10 Nov. 1962, 168-205.

MacLeod, Kirsten. "Romps with Ransom's King: Fans, Collectors, Academics, and the M. P. Shiel Archives." *English Studies in Canada* 30.1 (Mar. 2004): 117-36.

Malina, Frank J. "The Rocket Pioneers." *Engineering and Science*. 31.5 (1968): 9-32.

Malvern, A. S. "Tomorrow's Rarities." *Saturday Evening Post*, 10 Jan. 1931, 33+.

Mandelbrote, Giles, ed. *Out of Print and Into Profit: A History of the Rare and Secondhand Book Trade in Britain in the 20th Century*. New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll, 2006.

Mandelbrote, Giles. Introduction. *Out of Print and Into Profit*. Mandelbrote xv-xviii.

Marrot, H. V. *A Bibliography of the Works of John Galsworthy*. 1928. Reprint. New York: Burt Franklin, 1968.

McCutcheon, Barr. *Books Once Were Men*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1931.

McGill, Meredith L. *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834-1853*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2003.

McKitterick, David, ed. *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*. Vol. 6, 1830-1914.

Measuring Worth. Measuring Worth. University of Illinois at Chicago. 2013. Web. 12 May 2013.

Miller, Laura J. *Reluctant Capitalists: Bookselling and the Culture of Consumption*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2006.

_____. "Saving Books from the Market: Price Maintenance Policies in the United States and Europe." *Citizenship and Participation in the Information Age*. Ed. Manjunath Pendakur and Roma Harris. Toronto: Garamond, 2002. 219-30.

Miller, Lucasta. *The Brontë Myth*. New York: Knopf, 2003.

"Modern First Editions." *Living Age* 312 (18 Feb. 1922): 431-32.

"Modern Firsts." *Living Age* 324 (7 Mar. 1925): 573-77.

"Modern Novels at Yale." *New York Times*, 12 Apr. 1896, 16.

Mole, Tom, ed. *Romanticism and Celebrity Culture, 1750-1850*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2009.

"A More Optimistic View." *Publishers' Weekly*, 30 Aug. 1919, 556.

"Mr. Arnold's First Editions of American Authors." *New York Times*, 12 Jan. 1901.

"Mr. P. D. Armour's Valuable Book." *Daily Inter Ocean*, 3 Feb. 1895.

Muensterberger, Werner. *Collecting: An Unruly Passion: Psychological Persepctives*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994.

Murray, Heather. *Come, Bright Improvement! The Literary Societies of Nineteenth-Century Ontario*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2002.

Nelson, James G. "The Bodley Head and the Daniel Press." *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 77.1 (1983): 35-44.

_____. *The Early Nineties: A View from the Bodley Head*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1971.

_____. *Elkin Mathews: Publisher to Yeats, Joyce, Pound*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1989.

"New Enterprise at Babson Park." *The [Babson Institute] Alumni News* 6 (May 1929): 3.

"News Notes." *Bookman*, Jan. 1893, 103-112.

_____. Jan. 1895, 103-106.

_____. Apr. 1895, 5-8.

Newton, A. Edward. *The Amenities of Book-Collecting and Kindred Affections*. Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1918.

_____. *A Magnificent Farce and Other Diversions of a Book-Collector*. Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1921.

_____. "This Book Collecting Game." *Atlantic Monthly* 138 (Dec. 1926): 742-54.

_____. *This Book Collecting Game*. Boston: Little, Brown, Co., 1928.

_____. "This Business of Books." *World's Work* 58 (Jan. 1929): 70-73.

_____. "What to Collect—and Why." *Saturday Evening Post*, 24 Sept. 1927, 16+.

"Newton on Collecting," *Publishers' Weekly*, 16 Feb. 1929, 792.

Nichols, John, ed. *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*. 6 vols. London: Printed for the author, 1812-1816.

Nicoll, W. Robertson, and Thomas J. Wise, eds. *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*. 2 vols. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1895-1896.

"Note on Charles and George McLeish." *The Book Collector* 7 (1958): 11-12.

Nourie, Alan, and Barbara Nourie, eds. *American Mass-Market Magazines*. Westport: Greenwood, 1990.

Nowell-Smith, Simon. "T. J. Wise as Bibliographer." *Library* s5 24.2 (1969): 129-41.

O'Neill, Angus. "Patterns of Collecting and Trading in 'Modern' Literature." Mandelbrote 221-37.

_____. "Prices and Exchange Rates." Mandelbrote 333-35.

Orvell, Miles. *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1989

Partington, Wilfred. *Forging Ahead: The True Story of the Upward Progress of Thomas James Wise, Prince of Book Collectors, Bibliographer Extraordinaire and Otherwise*. New York: Putnam, 1939.

_____. *Thomas J. Wise in the Original Cloth: The Life and Record of the Forger of the Nineteenth-Century Pamphlets*. London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1946.

Pearce, Susan M. *Interpreting Objects and Collections*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Pearson, E. L. "The Sport of Kings." *Outlook* 136 (13 Feb. 1924): 272-73.

"Pedigreed Books for Millionaires." *Literary Digest* 84 (21 Feb. 1925): 59.

Pendle, George. *Strange Angel: The Otherworldly Life of Rocket Scientist John Whiteside Parsons*. Orlando: Harcourt, 2005.

Phelps, William Lyon. *Essays on Modern Novelists*. New York: Macmillan, 1910.

Pollard, A. W. "Book Collecting." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 11th ed. 1911.

_____. *Books in the House: An Essay on Private Libraries and Collections for Young and Old*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1904.

Price, Leah. "From Ghostwriter to Typewriter: Delegating Authority at Fin de Siècle." *The Faces of Anonymity: Anonymous and Pseudonymous Publication from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. 211-32.

"Prices for Books." *New York Times*, 25 Dec. 1897.

Prideaux, W. F. *A Bibliography of the Works of Robert Louis Stevenson*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903.

Purdy, Richard Little. *Thomas Hardy: A Bibliographical Study*. New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll, 2002.

"Quiet Space Lab." *Time Magazine*, 5 Oct. 1959, 67-68.

Radway, Janice. *A Feeling for Books: The Book-of-the-Month-Club, Literary Taste, and Middle-Class Desire*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1997.

"Random House Announces" [ad]. *Publishers' Weekly*, 17 Nov. 1928, 2101.

"The Rare Book Department." *Publishers' Weekly*, 29 Jan. 1927, 395.

Ratchford, Fannie E., ed. *Letters of Thomas J. Wise to John Henry Wrenn: A Further Inquiry into the Guilt of Certain Nineteenth-Century Forgers. New York: Knopf, 1944.*

Rees-Mogg, William. Memoirs. London: Harper, 2011.

Reid, B. L. The Man from New York: John Quinn and His Friends. New York: Oxford UP, 1968.

Reid, Peter H. "The Decline and Fall of the British Country House Library." *Libraries and the Cultural Record* 36.2 (2001): 345-66.

"Reno Magic Circle Sponsors Gay Party." *Nevada State Journal*, 23 Nov. 1952.

Roberts, William. "The First Edition Mania." *Fortnightly Review* 55 (Mar. 1894): 347-54.

_____. "Rare Books and Their Prices." *The Nineteenth Century* 33 (June 1893): 952-65.

_____. *Rare Books and Their Prices With Chapters on Pictures, Pottery, Porcelain and Postage Stamps*. London: George Redway, 1895.

Rosenbach. A. S. W. *Books and Bidders: The Adventures of a Bibliophile*. Boston: Little, Brown, Co., 1927.

Rosenbach, A. S. W., as told to Avery Strakosch. "Among Old Manuscripts." *Saturday Evening Post*, 5 Mar. 1927, 26-27+.

_____. "And Sold To." *Saturday Evening Post*, 23 Apr. 1927, 26-27+.

_____. "The Collector's Best Bet." *Saturday Evening Post*, 2 July 1927, 20-21+.

_____. "A Million-Dollar Bookshelf" *Saturday Evening Post*, 12 Feb. 1927, 20-21+.

_____. "Talking of Old Books." *Saturday Evening Post*, 22 Jan. 1927, 3-5+.

Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. *The Complete Poetical Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*. Ed. William Michael Rossetti. Boston: Little, Brown and Co, 1899.

_____. *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: His Family Letters*. Ed. William Michael Rossetti. London: Ellis and Elvey, 1895.

Rota, Anthony. "Bertram Rota." *Twentieth-Century British Book Collectors and Bibliographers*. Ed. William Baker and Kenneth Womack. Dictionary of Literary Biography. Vol. 201. Detroit: Gale, 1999. 282-88.

Rubin, Joan Shelley. *The Making of Middlebrow Culture*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1992.

Ryals, Clyde de L. *The Life of Robert Browning: A Critical Biography*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993.

Sabin, Frank T. "Rare Editions" [Response to J. H. Slater]. *Athenaeum*, 14 Apr. 1894, 478-49.

Sadleir, Michael. "Limited Editions." *Publishers' Weekly*, 21 Jan. 1928, 299-302.

"The Sale in Boston." *New York Times*, 27 Apr. 1895.

"Sale of the Foote Collection of English Literature." *The Critic* 23.677 (9 Feb. 1895): 101-107.

Salmon, Richard. "Signs of Intimacy: The Literary Celebrity in the 'Age of Interviewing.'" *Victorian Literature and Culture* (1997): 159-77.

Sargent, George H. "Modern First Editions." *American Mercury* 1 (Feb. 1924): 215-18.

Sawyer, Charles J. and F. J. Darton. *English Books, 1475-1900: A Signpost for Collectors*. Westminster: C. J. Sawyer Ltd., 1927.

"Scarce First Editions Appreciated." *New York Times*, 24 Nov. 1894.

"The Serious Problem of Today." *Publishers' Weekly*, 15 Nov. 1930, 2296-98.

Shaddy, Robert L. *Books and Book Collecting in America, 1890-1930*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2000.

Shaw, George Bernard. Appendix. *Thomas J. Wise in the Original Cloth*. By Wilfred Partington. London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1946.

_____. *Bernard Shaw's Book Reviews: Originally Published in the* Pall Mall Gazette *from 1885 to 1888*. Ed. Brian Tyson. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1991.

Shaylor, Joseph. "Reprints and Their Readers." *Cornhill Magazine* n.s. 18.106 (1905): 538-45.

Sims, George R. *Among My Autographs*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1904.

Skiff, Frederick. *Adventures in Americana: Recollections of Forty Years Collecting Books, Furniture, China, Guns and Glass*. Portland, OR: Metropolitan Press, 1935.

Slater, J. H. *Book Collecting: A Guide for Amateurs*. London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1892.

_____. "The Book Sales of 1892." *Athenaeum*, 21 Jan. 1893, 86.

_____. *Early Editions: A Bibliographical Survey of the Works of Some Popular Modern Authors*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Co., 1894.

_____. *How To Collect Books*. London: George Bell and Sons, 1905.

_____. "Rare Editions" [Response to C. E. S. Chambers]. *Athenaeum*, 24 Mar. 1894, 379-80.

_____. "Rare Editions" [Response to C. E. S. Chambers]. *Athenaeum*, 14 Apr. 1894, 478.

_____. *Round and About the Book Stalls: A Guide for the Book-Hunter*. London: L. Upcott Gill, 1891.

Smith, Frank Edmund. "A. E. Coppard." *British Short-Fiction Writers, 1915-1945*. Ed. John Headley Rogers. Dictionary of Literary Biography. Vol. 162. Detroit: Gale Research, 1996. 57-67.

Smith, Harry B. *A Sentimental Library: Comprising Books Formerly Owned by Famous Writers, Presentation Copies, Manuscripts, and Drawings*. Privately printed, 1914.

Smith, Margaret, ed. *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë, Vol. 1: 1829-1847*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1995.

Spencer, Walter T. *Forty Years in My Bookshop*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1923.

Starrett, Vincent. "The ABC of First Editions." *Saturday Evening Post*, 5 June 1926, 34+.

_____. "The Diamond in the Dust Heap." *Saturday Evening Post*, 28 Nov. 1925, 54+.

_____. Foreword. *Catalogue of First Editions of Modern Authors for Sale*. Walter M. Hill. No. 74. Jan. 1918.

_____. "Have You a Tamerlane in Your Attic?" *Saturday Evening Post*, 27 June 1925, 72.

_____. *Penny Wise and Book Foolish*. New York: Covici Friede, 1929.

Steeves, Harrison Ross. *Learned Societies and English Literary Scholarship in Great Britain*. New York: Columbia UP, 1913.

Stetz, Margaret D. *Facing the Late Victorians: Portraits of Writers and Artists from the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection*. Newark: U of Delaware P, 2007.

Stetz, Margaret D., and Mark Samuels Lasner. *England in the 1890s: Literary Publishing at the Bodley Head*. Washington, DC: Georgetown UP, 1990.

"Stock Brokers Fail for $2,000,000." *New York Times*, 19 Sept. 1900.

"Stock-Jobbing in Books." *Literary Digest* 100 (23 Mar. 1929): 24-25.

Sutherland, John. *Victorian Novelists and Publishers*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1976.

_____. "The Victorian Novelists: Who Were They?" *The Book History Reader*. Ed. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery. New York: Routledge, 2002. 259-68.

Swinburne, A. C. *The Letters of Algernon Charles Swinburne*. Ed. Edmund Gosse and Thomas James Wise. Vol. 2. New York: John Lane, 1919.

_____. *The Swinburne Letters*. Ed. Cecil Y. Lang. Vol. 5. New Haven: Yale UP, 1962.

The Swinburne Project. Digital Culture Lab, School of Library and Information Science, Indiana University, 14 May 2012. Web. 12 May 2013.

Symons, A. J. A. "The Modern First Edition Market." *Fortnightly Review* 139 (Apr. 1933): 521-22.

Tanselle, G. Thomas. "Non-Firsts." *Collectible Books: Some New Paths*. Ed. Jean Peters. New York: R. R. Bowker, 1979. 1-13.

Tebbel, John. *A History of Book Publishing in the United States. Vol. II: The Expansion of an Industry, 1865-1919*. New York: R. R. Bowker, 1975.

_____. *Between Covers: The Rise and Transformation of Book Publishing in America*. New York: Oxford UP, 1987.

Todd, William B., ed. *Thomas J. Wise Centenary Studies*. Austin: U of Texas P, 1959.

Trimble, Neil. "The Future of Firsts." *Publishers' Weekly*, 21 Feb. 1931, 978.

[Troxell, George M.] "The Fashion of Collecting." *Saturday Review of Literature*, 5 Jan. 1929, 578.

Ulrich, Carolyn F., and Karl Küp. *Books and Printing: A Selected List of Periodicals, 1800-1942*. New York: New York Public Library, 1943.

University and Community College System in Nevada. Board of Regents Meeting Minutes. 6-7 Oct. 1962.

Vincent, Leon H. "The Collector's Point of View" [Introduction]. *A Record of Books and Letters*. By William Harris Arnold. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1901.

"Wall-Street Methods with Rare Books." *Literary Digest* 64 (21 Feb. 1920): 34-35.

Waller, Philip. *Readers, Writers and Reputations*. New York: Oxford UP, 2006.

Warner, Oliver. Chatto and Windus: A Brief Account of the Firm's Origin, History and Development. London: Chatto and Windus, 1973.

Watson, Nicola J. *The Literary Tourist: Readers and Places in Romantic and Victorian Britain*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Weedon, Alexis. "Chatto, Andrew (1840-1913)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford UP. 2004. Web. 12 May 2013.

_____. *Victorian Publishing: The Economics of Book Production for a Mass Market 1836-1916*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003.

Welby, T. Earle. "*A Swinburne Library*" [review]. *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science, and Art*, 19 Sept. 1925, 306-07.

"Welfare of the Bookstore" [Response]. *Publishers' Weekly*, 23 Aug. 1919, 505-06.

Wells, Carolyn. "On Finishing Collector." *Atlantic Monthly* 138 (Nov. 1926): 623-32.

Whitaker, Jan. *Service and Style: How the Department Store Fashioned the Middle Class*. New York: St. Martin's, 2006.

Whitman, Walt. *Leaves of Grass and Other Writings*. Ed. Michael Moon. New York: W. W. Norton, 2002.

"Who Will Be Worthy in a Hundred Years?" *Literary Digest* 115 (1 Oct. 1932): 18.

Wilcox, C. W. "Firsts That Last." *Scribner's Magazine* 86 (Nov. 1929): 523-30.

Winterich, John T. "Good Second-Hand Condition." *Publishers' Weekly*, 26 Jan. 1929, 438-39.

_____. 16 Feb. 1929, 803-04.

Winterich, John T. *A Primer of Book Collecting*. New York: Greenberg, 1926.

Wise, Thomas J. *The Ashley Library: A Catalogue of Printed Books, Manuscripts and Autograph Letters Collected by Thomas James Wise*. 11 vols. London: Printed for private circulation, 1922-1936.

_____. *A Bibliography of the Works of Joseph Conrad*. 1921. Reprint. London: Dawsons, 1964.

_____. "*Early Editions*" [review]. *Bookman*, May 1894, 48-50.

_____. "The First Edition Mania." *Bookman*, Apr. 1894, 17-18.

_____. *Letters of Thomas J. Wise to John Henry Wrenn: A Further Inquiry into the Guilt of Certain Nineteenth-Century Forgers*. Ed. Fannie E. Ratchford. New York: Knopf, 1944.

_____. *A Swinburne Library: A Catalogue of Printed Books, Manuscripts, and Autograph Letters by Charles Algernon Swinburne*. London: Printed for private circulation, 1925.

Woolf, Virginia. "Middlebrow." 1932. *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays*. 1942. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974. 176-86.

"Yale and Dr. W. L. Phelps." *New York Times*, 7 Nov. 1895.

Yeo, Matthew. *Acquisition of Books by Chetham's Library, 1655-1700*. Leiden: Brill, 2011.

Yost, Karl. *A Bibliography of the Works of Edna St. Vincent Millay*. 1937. Reprint. New York: Burt Franklin, 1968.

MADELEINE THOMPSON

Education

Indiana University, Bloomington, IN
MA, Spring 2005; PhD 2013
Major field of study: English Literature
Minor field: Victorian Studies
Dissertation: "Birth of the First: Authenticity and the Collecting of Modern First Editions, 1890-1930"

MLS, Fall 2009
Rare Books and Manuscripts Specialization

Rare Book School, Charlottesville, VA
Book Illustration Processes to 1900, taught by Terry Belanger, June 2008

University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ
BA, *Magna cum laude*, May 2001
Major field of study: American Literature

Professional Experience

Librarian and Archivist. Wildlife Conservation Society, New York
January 2011 - Present

Department of Printed Books and Binding Volunteer. The Morgan Library and Museum, New York
March 2010 - January 2011

Curatorial Internship. The Lilly Library, Indiana University
August 2009 - December 2009

Assistant to the Head of Reference and Public Services. The Lilly Library, Indiana University
August 2008 - August 2009

Reference Attendant. The Lilly Library, Indiana University
August 2007 - July 2008

Book Review Editor. *Victorian Studies*, Indiana University
August 2006 - July 2009

Associate Instructor. English Department, Indiana University
August 2004 - July 2006; August - December 2009
Courses taught: First-Year Composition

Additional Recent Volunteer Experience, Professional Service, & Memberships

Member, Society of American Archivists and Archivists Round Table of Metropolitan New York, January 2011-Present
Compiler, *Victorian Studies* Annual Bibliography, 2009-2013
Volunteer, Monroe County Red Cross, Better Books Online Project, 2009
Member, American Library Association, Association of College and Research Libraries, and Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS), 2007-Present
Co-facilitator, Senior Outreach Program, Society of American Archivists, Indiana University Student Chapter, 2007
Planning Committee Member, National Interdisciplinary Graduate Conference, English Department, Indiana University, 2006-2007
Department Representative, Graduate and Professional Student Organization, Indiana University, 2005-2006

Fellowships & Awards

New York Archives Conference John A. Woods Fellowship, 2013
Bibliographical Society of America's Katharine Pantzer Fellowship in the British Book Trades, 2011
RBMS First-Time Attendee Scholarship Recipient, 2009
Rare Book School Scholarship Recipient, 2008
First-year Fellowship, Indiana University English Department, 2003-2004
Outstanding Humanities Senior, University of Arizona, 2001
Central Newspapers Foundation Scholarship Recipient, 1997-2001
Arizona Board of Regents High Honors Tuition Scholarship Recipient, 1997-2001

Exhibitions

The Remarkable Characters of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (co-curated). Lilly Library, Main Gallery, Fall 2009
Are We There Yet? The Age of the Automobile (The Thomas J. Solley Collection of Luxury Automobile Sales Catalogues). Lilly Library, Main Gallery, Summer 2009
The Book Thief (in conjunction with Bloomington Arts Council's One Book One Bloomington). Lilly Library, Ball Room, Spring 2009
Presidential Campaigns. Lilly Library, Lincoln Room, Fall 2008

Women on the Margins (co-curated; in conjunction with the 18th- and 19th-Century British Women Writers Conference). Lilly Library, Main Gallery, Spring 2008

Selected Conference Presentations

Moderator, "Voicing" Panel. North American Victorian Studies Association Conference, Purdue University, September 2006

"Turning Back the Clock: Bodily Rhythms in Nineteenth-Century England." Going Awry National Interdisciplinary Graduate Conference, English Department, Indiana University, March 2006

"Shame, Snake Bites and Savagery: Nationalism and Imperialism in Late-Victorian Vivisection Debates." Midwest Conference on British Studies, University of Notre Dame, September 2005

June 2013.